Yearning for God

Rev. Joseph J. Williams, S.J.

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YEARNING FOR GOD

Jesus, who gave Himself for you
Upon the Cross to die,
Opens to you His sacred Heart;
O to that Heart draw nigh.

—FATHER CASWALL

YEARNING FOR GOD

THE PATH TO PEACE OF THE SOUL

BY

Rev. JOSEPH J. WILLIAMS, S.J.

Author of "Keep the Gate"

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PREFACE

The Cry of the Soul

WHILE on the Jamaica Missions, for a time I had spiritual care of a Boys' Industrial School. There were in the institution about one hundred and fifty lads, all committed by the Courts, some as street waifs or abandoned children, others as incorrigibles, and many others for larceny or minor delinquencies. In years they ranged from little tots of three up to husky lads, legally adjudged as sixteen, but some of them in reality eighteen or even nineteen years of age. And yet, a single Sister, Mother D. the boys called her, had sole care of this flotsam and jetsam of the streets. Two lay Sisters helped with the menial work, and while a number of Novices taught the classes, on Mother D. devolved the care of the entire group during much of the day and the entire night.

One of the youngsters, Walter by name, had been little better than a heathen at the time of his commitment. He was baptized, and that was all. In fact, his knowledge of God was

confined to the profanity of the street. But from the day of his first Holy Communion, he began his life anew, and in the course of time became not only the model of the School, but developed into Mother D.'s chief assistant in caring for the smaller boys.

There is in Jamaica a dread disease. The natives call it the hip disease. It begins perhaps with a little sore upon the foot, but within a few days the entire body may become one hideous ulcer. The joints begin to swell. The limbs contract. By placing the victim in a stretching machine, I was told, the life of one in ten might be saved. But that one would be doomed to a cripple's life for his remaining days. Almost a miracle, it would seem, would be required to really effect the cure of the victim of the hip disease.

Little Walter was taken down with this dreadful malady. Mother D. was inconsolable. With her own prayers, she stormed Heaven, and had all her charges praying unceasingly that the needed miracle might be granted.

Walter would take no part in this petition for his recovery. His sufferings were intense, but he bore them without murmur or complaint. He accepted every twitching pain as reparation for his childhood sins, and his soul,

now purified and filled with love divine, rose above the attractions of life and the world's allurements. He sighed, not so much for easement of suffering as for release from the trammels of earth. "I want to go to God. I want to go to God," was the little fellow's constant cry, his whole-souled prayer to the Master of life and death. Useless it was for Mother D. to plead with him; "But, Walter, if you go to God, who will help me in the care of the little ones?" His only answer was: "O Sister, I want to go to God. I want to go to God."

One evening, immediately after administering the Last Sacraments, I stood by the sufferer's bed and gazed down on the little form actually quivering from the acuteness of the pain. Poor Mother D. was standing near, tears stealing down her cheeks, while her lips moved in prayer, begging so earnestly that the boy might yet be spared to her. My own eyes were moist, when Walter suddenly turned to me, his suffering frame shaken with emotion, and with an anxious pleading in his voice that would have softened the hardest heart, cried out; "Father, can't I go to God? With an effort to control myself, I said to him: "Walter, if God wants you, go to Him." That night Walter went to God.

The cry of that dying boy is the cry of every human soul, "I want to go to God. I want to go to God." If we had died in the hour of Baptism, how gladly would our pure souls have taken their flight to God! In the days of childhood's innocence, we felt the yearning of the soul for God. With the course of years, we have slowly but surely stifled the urgent cry. We may, perchance, have even fettered the soul with the chains of sin, but the voice of the soul is never entirely silenced. Through conscience we hear its heart-rending cry of protest, "I want to go to God. I want to go to God." In the moment of temptation, it is the soul that pleads to go to God. In the hour of victory, it is again the soul that proclaims in triumph, "I want to go to God."

A previous volume, *Keep the Gate,* considered the soul in its struggle with sin. Its purpose was to help the fallen to rise again, and to assist one and all to resist the temptations of the evil one. The present volume considers the soul as purged from guilt, striving to advance in the love of God, and thus approach to the perfection of its state. It proposes to mark out the way to the higher life of closer and more intimate union with God.

PREFACE

The historian Eusebius prefaces the Fifth Book of his Ecclesiastical History with the remark; "Others, indeed, who compose historical narratives, would record but victories gained in battle, the trophies of war, the warlike achievements of generals, the bravery of soldiers, sullied with blood and countless murders, for the sake of children and country and home. But our narrative embraces a line of action and conduct agreeable to God. The wars and conflicts are most pacific in character, and their ultimate aim is to give peace to the soul. Our narrative would inscribe on imperishable monuments the deeds of those who have manfully contended for the truth rather than for their country, and who have preferred a life of piety to the company of dearest friends. Church history proclaims and holds in everlasting remembrance the firmness of the champions of the true religion; their fortitude in the endurance of countless trials; their triumphs and victories over Satan and invisible powers; and the glorious crown which all these have merited." [1] What Eusebius purposed to accomplish in his work may well be applied to the history each one is writing in the book of eternal life.

[1] *Eusebius*, Hist. Eccles., V, Pref.

As in *Keep the Gate,* here also the aim is to place before the reader a number of stories and anecdotes, culled from the Scriptures as well as from history, ecclesiastical and profane. It was in parable that the Master spoke, and a timely incident or illustration will often open up rich veins of thought. Again the applications, as a rule, will be merely indicated. The results of one's own reflection are more fruitful for the soul.

May this little volume encourage the diffident soul to renewed effort in the service of the Master. May it strengthen the disquieted soul in the hour of weakness, when discouragement would stay progress in virtue. May it lift up and urge on the generous, devoted soul to self-immolation in the unwavering quest of God's greater glory. And after its perusal, strengthened and fortified in spirit, may the cry of every soul ring true, "I want to go to God. I want to go to God."

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College of the Holy Cross
Worcester
Mass.

YEARNING FOR GOD

CHAPTER I

Christ and Souls

WHILE the Diocletian persecution was at its height, a youth at the Imperial Court in Nicomedia learned to admire the fortitude of the Christian martyrs. At a later date, this same Constantine, though yet a pagan, was convinced that the spiritual forces of Christianity could alone stay the disintegration of the Empire, and so undertook his war against the tyrant Maxentius. "One day," as the historian tells us, "whilst invoking the God of the Christians for aid in his enterprise, he and the whole army beheld in the skies above the midday sun a resplendent figure of the Cross with the Greek inscription, *En Touto Nika*—'In this conquer.' The following night Christ appeared to Constantine, ordered him to adopt the Cross as his standard, and promised him victory. The victory was won at the Milvian bridge, which spans the Tiber." [1]

[1] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, 1, No. 36.

After this brilliant triumph, in acknowledgment that it was the work of God, Constantine gave orders that the statue which the Roman Senate had dedicated to him, and which was about to be placed in the Forum to commemorate the victory, should bear in its hand, not the scepter, but the standard of the Cross, on which should be inscribed these words: "Through this salutary sign and symbol of true strength, have I delivered your city from the yoke of the tyrant." [2]

Another decade found Constantine the sole master of the Empire. The final struggle between Constantine and Licinius developed into a religious war, with Christianity and Paganism aligned against each other. Around the standard of the Cross of Constantine assembled the converts to the Faith, who knelt with their bishops and prayed for victory. To Licinius rallied the pagan priests and Egyptian soothsayers, who arrogantly proclaimed a triumph for the idols of Rome. On the very day of the decisive battle at Chalcedon, Licinius proudly boasted: "This day will I make it plain whether we or the Christians are in error, and decide which is the true divinity, our gods, or their crucified God." [3] The

[2] Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. 1, No. 67.
[3] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, 1, No. 37.

despised Nazarene proved the victor, and once again the Cross triumphed. This was in the year 324.

Christianity now became the dominant religion of the Empire, but Constantine himself was not admitted to Baptism until the very end of his life, and even then the sacrament was administered by Eusebius of Nicomedia, the leader of the Arian party.[4] On the calumnious accusation of Fausta, his second wife, Constantine had condemned to death the eldest of his own children, the Caesar Crispus, scarcely twenty-five years of age, when he had just won the brilliant honors of a naval victory. Discovering the innocence of his victim, the Emperor ordered the stepmother to be suffocated in a vapor-bath.[5] All this, combined with his vanity and voluptuousness, prevented his being received as a Christian until under the very shadow of death. In fact, as the historian Allies remarks, "He remained to the last not even a catechumen, with a soldier's ignorance of Christian doctrine." [6]

Had Constantine the Great added to his natural genius the higher moral qualifications of soul which he lacked, how much brighter

[4] Allies, Throne of the Fisherman, p. 161.
[5] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. I, p. 366.
[6] Allies, Throne of the Fisherman, p. 172.

would have been his page in history! He might have been chosen by God to establish the Church not merely in the Roman Empire, but throughout the world. Instead of a few provinces, all nations might have acknowledged his sovereignty. In place of a sign emblazoned in the skies as a portent of victory, the voice of Eternal Truth might have declared him to all men as the champion of the Church; might have established beyond doubt the victory he was to achieve; might have entrusted to him a standard of the Cross that could never know defeat.

If such had been the case, and if the champion chosen of Heaven had risen up and sent forth his proclamation to the world, summoning all faithful subjects to rally to the support of his cause, making as a single condition of service, that they should be satisfied to share his food and raiment, and promising in return to be their companion in all watches and hardships; only asking them, in fine, to follow where he should lead—what would have been the response to such an invitation, coming from such a leader?

When the angelic Gloria broke the silence of the first Christmas night, it welcomed to this earth a King, armed with a divine commission to win the souls of men. When, amid the

splendors of Thabor, the heavens opened and the voice out of the cloud was heard proclaiming, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him," [7] it was the testimony of the Omnipotent Father setting the seal of the Godhead on the life-work of the Christ that was to see its completion not on Calvary but in the Church, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, destined to endure to the end of time. When our Divine Saviour addressed to Peter the words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," [8] He did but make proclamation of His purposed campaign against sin and error. When by the Sea of Galilee He gave the same Prince of the Apostles the sacred commission of feeding the lambs and the sheep, [9] He created the unbroken succession of generals who are actively to conduct and direct the great movement under His own special guidance and protection. And when, finally, the order was issued to the Apostles and their successors to go and teach all nations, [10] He set His armies in motion, and whatever the vicissitudes of the warfare, whatever the apparent checks and temporary

7 Matt. XVII, 5.
8 *Ibid.*, XVI, 18.
9 John, XXI, 15-17.
10 Matt. XXVIII, 19.

reverses, those armies have daily advanced the cause and will continue to advance it on to final victory.

Moreover, Christ has issued His invitation to all men to participate in the great movement of saving souls, laying down as the condition of discipleship that they should be ready to share with Him the labors and sufferings, as He will share with the disciples the victory and triumph. In Christ's service, then, even the humblest follower will receive his share in the spoils of victory, in accordance with the precept of God laid down for Israel: "And thou shalt divide the spoil equally, between them that fought and went out to the war, and between the rest of the multitude." [11]

In the moment of Baptism, we were enrolled in the divine crusade for souls. In each and every confession, we make this our supreme allegiance. In the Eucharistic Sacrament of love, we are instructed and prepared for future strife. While in Confirmation, we receive our commission to become strong and perfect Christians, and soldiers of Jesus Christ. Finally, those who have received the special blessing of a call to the religious life, have been chosen as Christ's body-guard, the com-

[11] Num. xxxi, 27.

panions who are to share with Him the burden of the struggle, and to receive as their inheritance no less than eternal salvation, if they but prove themselves faithful and true to their calling.

Enthusiastic devotion has ever been associated with a worthy cause assured of success. We read in the Book of Numbers that, when the Chosen People, marching from Haseroth, had pitched their tents in the desert of Pharan, and Moses, obedient to the command of God, had selected twelve spies, one from each of the Tribes of Israel, the name of Osee, the son of Nun, was changed to Josue.[12] In Hebrew, Josue is the same as the Holy Name of Jesus, and signifies a Saviour. In fact, we find St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles,[13] and St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews,[14] both using the form of Jesus for Josue the son of Nun.

While wandering in the Desert of Sin, the Children of Israel were sorely oppressed with thirst. To quell their murmurs and complaints, Moses and Aaron besought the Lord to open to them a "fountain of living water." [15] The Lord heard their prayer and directed Moses to assemble the people and to strike the rock with his rod that water might flow

[12] *Ibid.*, XIII, 17. [13] VII, 45. [14] IV, 8. [15] Num., XX, 6.

forth. But Moses, perhaps wavering in his confidence in God, or possibly seeking to hasten the fulfilment of the divine pledge, struck the rock, not merely once as directed, but, without waiting the divine pleasure, hastened to strike it a second time. For this weakness of faith, he was deprived by God of the privilege of leading the people of Israel into the Promised Land.[16]

Accordingly, after gazing down from the heights of Mount Abarim upon the land he might not enter,[17] Moses made supplication of the Lord: "May the Lord the God of the spirits of all flesh provide a man, that may be over this multitude: and may go out and in before them, and may lead them out, or bring them in: lest the people of the Lord be as sheep without a shepherd. And the Lord said to him: Take Josue, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and put thy hand upon him. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest and all the multitude: and thou shalt give him precepts in the sight of all, and part of thy glory, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may hear him. If anything be to be done, Eleazar the priest shall consult the Lord for him. He and all the children

[16] *Ibid.*, XX, 12.
[17] *Ibid.*, XXVII, 12.

of Israel with him, and the rest of the multitude shall go out and go in at his word. Moses did as the Lord had commanded. And when he had taken Josue, he set him before Eleazar the priest, and all the assembly of the people. And laying his hands on his head, he repeated all things that the Lord had commanded." [18]

Here, then, we have a leader, duly chosen by God Himself for a specific purpose, with the success of the undertaking unmistakably guaranteed by revelation from Divine Truth. "Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Josue the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, and said to him: Moses My servant is dead: arise, and pass over this Jordan, thou and thy people with thee, into the land which I will give to the children of Israel. I will deliver to you every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, as I have said to Moses. From the desert and from Libanus unto the great river Euphrates, all the land of the Hethites unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border. No man shall be able to resist you all the days of thy life: as I have been with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee.

[18] *Ibid.*, XXVII, 16-23.

Take courage, and be strong: for thou shalt divide by lot to this people the land, for which I swore to their fathers, that I would deliver it to them. Take courage, therefore, and be very valiant: that thou mayst observe and do all the law, which Moses My servant hath commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayst understand all things which thou dost. Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou mayst observe and do all things that are written in it: then shalt thou direct thy way, and understand it. Behold, I command thee, take courage, and be strong. Fear not, and be not dismayed: because the Lord thy God is with thee in all things whatsoever thou shalt do." [19]

True to his vocation, Josue at once makes proclamation to the people: "And Josue commanded the princes of the people, saying: Pass through the midst of the camp, and command the people, and say: Prepare your victuals: for after the third day you shall pass over the Jordan and shall go in to possess the land which the Lord your God will give you. And he said to the Rubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasses: Remember

[19] Jos., I, 1-9.

the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying: The Lord your God hath given you rest, and all this land. Your wives and children and cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan: but pass you over armed before your brethren, all of you that are strong of hand, and fight for them, until the Lord give rest to your brethren as he hath given you, and they also possess the land which the Lord your God will give them: and so you shall return into the land of your possession, and you shall dwell in it, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun." [20]

It is needless to conjecture as to the response made to such an appeal, coming as it did from a leader chosen by the Most High; a leader whose very name had been changed to Saviour by the Omnipotent God Himself, and whose mission had been sealed with the assurance of the Godhead that his victory should be complete. "And they made answer to Josue, and said: All that thou hast commanded us we will do: and whithersoever thou shalt send us, we will go. As we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey thee also: only be the Lord thy God with thee, as He was with Moses.

[20] *Ibid.*, I, 10-15.

He that shall gainsay thy mouth, and not obey all thy words that thou shalt command him, let him die: only, take thou courage and do manfully." [21]

All this may be taken as a prefiguring of Christ our Lord and His mission among men. King David himself, in the second of his inspired poems, where for the first time Our Saviour is called the Christ, the Anointed, would seem to be cognizant of this, as he foretells the continuous warfare of the infidels and heretics against the Christ and His Church, and the final triumph of the latter.[22]

In the first strophe, the Psalmist depicts the sedition. In this sedition, Pilate and Herod are particularly referred to, as St. Luke assures us in the Acts of the Apostles.[23] "Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord, and against His Christ. Let us break their bonds asunder and let us cast away their yoke from us." [24]

The second strophe discloses God as taking cognizance of the sedition. "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them. Then shall He speak to

[21] *Ibid.*, I, 16-18.
[22] Ps. II.
[23] Acts. IV, 27.
[24] Ps. II, 1-3.

them in His anger, and trouble them in His rage." [25]

In the third strophe, Christ receives His commission. "But I am appointed king by him over Sion His holy mountain, preaching His commandment. The Lord hath said to Me: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel." [26]

Finally, in the last strophe, we find the divine proclamation, and as the pronouncement comes from God, its terms are absolute. There can be no question of failure. "And now, O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth. Serve ye the Lord with fear: and rejoice unto Him with trembling. Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way. When His wrath shall be kindled in a short time, blessed are all they that trust in Him." [27]

The verification of this psalm is found in the Book of the Apocalypse, when "the seventh angel sounded the trumpet: and there were great voices in heaven, saying: The kingdom

[25] Ps. II, 4-5. [26] *Ibid.*, 6-9. [27] *Ibid.*, 10-12.

of this world is become our Lord's and His Christ's, and He shall reign forever and ever." [28]

It is well, however, to note in passing, that this vision was not restricted to the Psalmist and the Sage of Patmos. It was vouchsafed to more than one of the prophets as well. For Isaias cries out: "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, as a man of war shall He stir up zeal: He shall shout and cry: He shall prevail against His enemies." [29] And again, Jesus the son of Sirach of Jerusalem, writing about two centuries before Christ, notes in his Book of Ecclesiasticus: "It is a great glory to follow the Lord: for length of days shall be received of Him." [30]

With these prophecies before them, and hearkening to the ringing words of the Psalmist, "The Lord shall reign to eternity, yea, forever and ever: ye Gentiles shall perish from His land," [31] what wonder is it, that a proud and sensual people should confuse temporal prosperity with a kingdom spiritual? A triumph of the soul without wordly advantage was to them absolutely incomprehensible. Well, then, does Giovanni Papini thus describe the condition of the Children of Israel: "The Jews,

28 Apoc., XI, 15.
29 Is., XLII, 13.
30 Eccius., XXIII, 38.
31 Ps. IX, 16 secundo.

carnal-minded materialists embittered by humiliation, full of rancor and evil thoughts, are not awaiting a poor, gentle, despised Messias. They all, except a few of clear and prophetic vision, are dreaming of a terrestrial Messias, an armed King, a second David, a warrior who will shed real blood, the red blood of enemies, who will rebuild more splendidly than ever the palace of Solomon and the Temple. All the kings will bring tribute to Him; not tribute of love and reverence, but of massy gold and silver coin. This earthly King will revenge Himself on the enemies of Israel, on those who make Israel suffer, who hold the people of Israel in slavery. The slaves will be the masters and the masters slaves, and all the countries of the world will have their capital at Jerusalem, and crowned kings will kneel before the throne of the new King of Israel." [32]

Father Meschler, too, treating the same subject, declares: "It is no marvel, that, amid these evil dispositions, ideas took firm root as to the coming Messias which were a mere abortion of the truth, and the fruit of their stubbornness and estrangement from God. They did not want a Redeemer from sins, but a deliverer from the oppressive yoke of foreign government, a secular ruler, who would place

[32] Papini, Life of Christ, p. 53.

them at the head of the nations, an avenging, pleasure-loving and ambitious saviour." [33]

In the moment of deepest shame and ignominy, Christ stood before Pilate to give answer to the question, "Art Thou the king of the Jews?" [34] The leaders of the Nation were stirring up the rabble in the courtyard to even greater frenzy in their tireless demand, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Then did the Victim of blind hate, for all time, make clear His claim: "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now My kingdom is not from hence." [35] Commenting on these words, Father Meschler remarks: "What does He say of His kingdom, its origin and nature? That it is upon the earth, certainly, but not of the earth: it is a spiritual, supernatural kingdom, the kingdom of truth. It does not fight with weapons of steel, but with the power of conviction, and conquers by this means the hearts that by right belong to it: He Himself, Our Saviour, is witness to this truth, and is Himself the Truth." [36]

This, then, is the mission of the Christ, to win the hearts of men; to ransom souls from

[33] Meschler, Life of Christ, I, p. 15.
[34] John, XVIII, 33.
[35] *Ibid.*, 36.
[36] Meschler, l. c., II, p. 368.

the bondage of sin, by effecting the triumph of grace over the weakness of nature. The sublime means to salvation, established by Christ and entrusted to the guardianship of the Church, are the sacramental channels of grace, whereby the intellect is enlightened and the will strengthened in the hour of need or conflict. However, in this divine economy of grace, even the lowliest of men, by word and by example, can become messengers of the King and valiant warriors in the developing and spread of the reign of Christ.

St. Ignatius, moreover, speaks in strict accord with facts, when he bids us: "See Christ our Lord, the Eternal King, and before Him the whole world, all of whom and each in particular He calls, and says: My will is to conquer the whole world, and all My enemies, and thus to enter into the glory of My Father. Whoever, therefore, desires to come with Me, must labor with Me, in order that, following Me in suffering, he may likewise follow Me in glory." [37]

The historian Alzog assures us that, "Notwithstanding the vast power and wide dominion exercised by the Moslems, they have for centuries been disquieted by a prophecy, according to which the Ottoman Empire is

[37] Spir. Exerc., The Kingdom of Christ.

one day to be destroyed by the Christians." [38] Be this as it may, it is certainly the will of Christ to conquer the whole world, and He invites all men to play a part in this campaign for souls.

"Jesus Christ is not king," St. Augustine warns us, "in order to lay tribute on His subjects, or put arms in their hands, and lead them to temporal conquest. But He is king in order to guide souls, to lead them in the ways of God, and secure their salvation, and this He does by the practice of faith, hope and charity. Our first duty is to serve Him by following Him."

The Emperor Napoleon, on the other hand, had inserted in the French Catechism, "that any one resisting the authority of the Emperor, who had been consecrated by the Pope, risked his eternal salvation; and that one of the first duties of a Christian was to do military service for one who had restored the authority of the Church." [39] However, what was demanded in foolish arrogance by the Emperor of the French becomes our bounden duty in our relations with the King of kings. In fact, we might almost paraphrase the boastful claim of the Corsican. Anyone who resists the author-

[38] Alzog., Univ. Ch. Hist., II, No. 176. [39] *Ibid.*, III, No. 391.

ity of the Christ, whose mission has been confirmed by the Heavenly Father, risks his eternal salvation; and the first duty of a Christian is to fight the good fight in the service of One who established the authorty of the Church and placed His Vicar upon earth to direct the great crusade for souls.

It is in this spirit that St. Paul explains to the Corinthians: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ and having in readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be fulfilled." [40] Christ Himself was the model of obedience, "becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." [41] There is nothing He can ask of us, that He has not made possible by His own example. He does not bid us, "Go before." His invitation is simply, "Come. Follow Me."

Well, then, does the Apostle of the Gentiles, writing from Corinth about twenty-four years after Our Lord's Ascension, assure the converts at Rome: "I reckon that the sufferings

[40] II Cor., x, 4-6. [41] Philip., II, 8.

of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." [42] And again, toward the close of his life, while awaiting in the Roman dungeon the hour of martyrdom, the same Apostle writes to his disciple Timothy, urging him to hasten his coming to the Eternal City, and cries out almost in ecstasy: "A faithful saying: for if we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." And then, as if remembering the frailty of human nature, he adds a warning, "If we deny Him, He will also deny us." [43] And it is Paul the Apostle who makes the acknowledgment and would warn his beloved disciple lest he falter in his quest for souls.

And all the time, so many souls are crying out to go to God and only waiting for some messenger of the Christ to strike off the fetters of sin that hold them back from God. Moreover, countless infant souls in the lands of the heathen are yearning with all the earnestness of the first moment of their being, striving blindly to attain to the unknown God they cannot comprehend while the blight of original sin stands a barrier between them and the object of their existence. Even while the puny little bodies shiver in their weakness, and the

[42] Rom., VIII, 18. [43] II Tim., II, 11-12.

tiny hearts seem undecided whether to cease their flutterings or to undertake the burden of life, the poor souls themselves are trembling on the brink of eternity, groping aimlessly for their true destiny and appealing with innate longing for some generous spirit to bring to them the saving waters of Baptism, before the flame of life has flickered out.

Many, too, the sin-burdened souls, chafing and straining under the weight of iniquity, who are in urgent rebellion against the domineering body with its craven longings and appetites. For, amid the consequent disgust and discontent, there is the stifled cry of protest and of anguish. That wretched, fallen soul is sighing, pleading, yearning in its dungeons of the flesh, that some apostle of the Christ may come and break its shackles of sin and thus effect its peace with God.

How terrifying the thought! If I am wanting in generosity and zeal, there may be souls who will thereby never come to the fruition of their hopes. Their heart-rending cry to go to God, will have been in vain. The very purpose of their being will have been made void for all eternity, precisely because my service of the Master was circumscribed and limited by my personal seeking of ease of creature comforts.

Such was the enthusiasm of the First Crusade that even robbers and brigands came forth from their dens, confessed their misdeeds, and promised to expiate them in Palestine, under the banner of the Cross. [44] So, too, to-day, the proper motive, with true contrition, may change the robber to the saint, and convert to the service of Christ and souls the sinner of yesterday.

In the employ of Pope Gregory XI was a band of Bretons of fierce and untrained courage. When asked if they expected to enter Florence, which was in revolt against the Holy See, they answered fearlessly: "Since the sun enters it, why should not we?" [45] Why cannot a like determination mark the service of each follower of the Christ to-day, in His Crusade for souls!

At the Siege of Acre in 1291, the Turks vainly strove to cross a deep ditch protecting the city. There was among the Sultan's troops a body of men known as Chages, a kind of new sect among the Moslems, noted for their fanatical devotion to the cause of Islam. To these the Sultan addressed himself. "You who call yourselves the chosen of the Prophet, show now your faith by deeds, and throw yourselves into yonder ditch as a bridge for the mame-

[44] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. III, p. 165. [45] *Ibid.*, p. 523.

lukes." Without a moment's hesitation the Chages obeyed the call, and with mad enthusiasm, rank on rank, they flung themselves into the chasm, until they filled it to the brink. The mamelukes then urged their horses over the quivering bridge of human bodies.[46] What these perverted infidels did out of devotion to error, we should be ready to do in defense of Truth, sacrificing, if need be, life itself in so holy a cause.

We read in the Second Book of Kings, of Absalom's rebellion against his father. "And there came a messenger to David, saying: All Israel with their whole heart followeth Absalom. And David said to his servants that were with him in Jerusalem: Arise and let us flee: for we shall not escape else from the face of Absalom: make haste to go out, lest he come and overtake us, and bring ruin upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword. And the king's servants said to him: Whatsoever our lord the king shall command, we thy servants will willingly execute. . . . And the king going forth and all Israel on foot, stood afar off from the house: and all his servants walked by him, and the bands of the Cerethi and Phelethi, and all the Gethites, valiant warriors, six hundred men who had

[46] Knights of St. John, p. 15.

followed him from Geth on foot, went before the king. And the king said to Ethai the Gethite: Why comest thou with us? Return and dwell with the king, for thou art a stranger, and art come out of thy own place. Yesterday thou camest, and to-day shalt thou be forced to go forth with us? But I shall go whither I am going: return thou, and take back thy brethren with thee, and the Lord will show thee mercy and truth because thou hast shown grace and fidelity. And Ethai answered the king, saying: As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth: in what place soever thou shalt be, my lord, O king, either in death, or in life, there will thy servant be. And David said to Ethai: Come, and pass over. And Ethai the Gethite passed, and all the men that were with him, and the rest of the people." [47]

Here is the model of what our own fidelity should be in the great crusade for souls. With Ethai the Gethite we must pledge our faith to our true Leader Christ. "In what place soever Thou shalt be, my Lord, O King, either in life, or in death, there also shall I Thy servant be."

A traveler tells us,[48] that "Just before you reach the town of Bethlehem, on the flat sheet

[47] II Kings, xv, 13-22.
[48] Geikie, The Holy Land and the Bible, I, p. 137.

of rock on which our tents were pitched, were three round wells, or rather well-shafts. . . . Situated at the only spot where a gate could have been built, the north end of the town, which alone joins the country without an intervening valley, this, the largest well, seems fairly entitled to be regarded as that from which the precious draught was brought to the shepherd king." It was the harvest time, and David was concealed in a cave overlooking the camp of the Philistines in the valley of the giants.[49] "And three of the thirty captains went down to the rock, wherein David was, to the cave of Odollam; when the Philistines encamped in the valley of Raphaim. And David was in a hold, and the garrison of the Philistines in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said: O that some man would give me water of the cistern of Bethlehem, which is in the gate. And these three broke through the midst of the camp of the Philistines, and drew water out of the cistern of Bethlehem, which was in the gate, and brought it to David to drink: and he would not drink of it, but rather offered it to the Lord." [50]

As the gathering gloom closed around the shame of Calvary, a piteous cry was forced from the lips of the Crucified. The burning

[49] II Kings, XXIII, 13. [50] I Paral., XI, 15-18.

of the nail-pierced hands and feet, the gradual extinction of life through gangrened wounds and exhaustion, the loss of blood and dislocation of limbs, all induced a feverish all-consuming thirst. And yet, what was the thirst of Christ's poor pain-racked body in comparison with His thirst for souls? It was no mere craving for easement from His physical sufferings that induced that cry, "I thirst." It was no less the profession of the Crucified that He is consumed with a thirst for the souls of wayward men, a thirst for apostles who will share in man's salvation by leading back the sinner to repentance. Are we not ready to assuage that thirst divine in some small way in our own humble spheres of life? The eyes of the dying Christ are gazing down through the gloom of the centuries of time and reading the secrets of our hearts. The poor, parched lips, cracking at every word, breathe forth the prayer, the plea to each and every one of us: "It is for souls I thirst."

We are but faint-hearted camp-followers, unworthy of the name of Christ-ones, if we are satisfied merely to follow in the footsteps of the Master, and from time to time profess our faith in the ordinary routine of the day. We must be ready to distinguish ourselves, as did the Captains of the Shepherd King. We

must diplay personal efforts of valor in the great crusade for souls. We must seek occasions of giving proof in deed that we are really devoted to the cause of souls, that we are ready to risk our lives to save a single soul.

While urging the undertaking of the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont, the Sovereign Pontiff, Urban II, thus addressed the assembly: "Warriors and chiefs who hear my voice, you who always seek vain pretexts for war, rejoice, for here is a lawful war. The hour has come to make atonement for so many deeds of violence committed in the midst of peace, so many victories marred by injustice. Turn against the enemies of the Christian name the arms you unjustly use against one another. You who have so often been the terror of your fellow citizens, and who, for a paltry price, disgrace your arms to minister to the passions of others, now, armed with the sword of the Machabees,[51] go forth to defend the house of Israel. Soldiers of hell, be now the champions of God! You are not now to revenge the wrongs of men, but those of the Lord of Hosts! If you triumph, the blessings of Heaven and the kingdoms of Asia will be yours; if you fall, you will have the consolation of expiring upon the soil dyed by your

51 II Mach., xv, 16.

Saviour's blood; and God will not forget that you have fallen in the ranks of His holy war. We shall have under our own care and under the protection of St. Peter and St. Paul all who enter upon this noble undertaking; we command that in their absence their families and property be scrupulously respected. Soldiers of the living God, let no unmanly tenderness, no unhallowed sentiment bind you to your homes! Listen but to the groans of captive Sion; break all earthly ties; remember the words of the Lord: 'Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or land for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting.' " The Holy Father was here interrupted by the multitude, who by a simultaneous impulse cried out: "God wills it. God wills it. God wills it." And "God wills it" forthwith became the battle-cry of the Crusades.[52]

And so to-day "God wills it" in the great crusade for souls. God wills it that missionaries should go in ever-increasing numbers to the ends of the earth, penetrating deep into the lands of heathen and infidel. God wills it that the blood of martyrs should still be the seed of Christians. God wills it that countless,

[52] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., III, p. 164.

chosen souls should spurn the world and all it has to offer, that in the religious life they may seek first their own sanctification and then the sanctification of others—the flower of our youth, that their innocence and purity may be preserved undefiled; the fairest of our maidens, who renounce the glory of motherhood to proclaim themselves the spouses of Christ and the handmaids of the Lord. God wills it that the world should yield her sons of promise that as Levites of the Lord they may devote their lives to the service of the House of God; that as other Christs they may daily stand at the holy altar to renew the Sacrifice of Calvary. God wills it no less, that generous, noble souls, regardless of age and sex, should devote themselves and spend life's energy and strength in the classroom with the little ones of Christ, or in the hospitals at the bedside of the sick and suffering, ever in quest of other souls that can find no rest except in the fruition of the Good Supreme. God wills it, too, that even amid the turmoil and temptations of the world, lay apostles should carry on the works of mercy and zeal, reclaiming poor sinners in city slums or prison holds, sacrificing their time, their wealth, nay even ease and comfort and perhaps their very lives in the great crusade, wherein

each one of us has a part to play, and where no one else can supply our own deficiencies.

God wills it, that every soul, with its innate longings to come to Him, should find the apostle that is to point the way, the saving hand that is to help it over the rough places in life, the devoted spirit that will quail before no rebuff and will endure all hardships to hold it safe, the zealous follower of the Crucified who will be ready to die the death that this one soul may at life's close at least, be found true to the purpose of its being.

God wills it, finally, that each and every one of us should play his little part in this divine crusade for souls; and with "God wills it" on our lips, and our hearts inflamed with love and true devotion, we must make profession of undying service to our dear Leader Christ: "Lord, I'll follow You whithersoever You go."

CHAPTER II

The Beginning of the Crusade

THE inspired Psalmist, in foretelling the general corruption of man before the redemption by Christ, exclaimed: "The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God. They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no, not one. The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher: with their tongues they acted deceitfully: the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and unhappiness in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." [1]

At the time of the Incarnation, the Roman

[1] Ps. XIII, 1-3.

Empire comprised nearly three-fourths of the then-known world. It had for its limits on the north, the Rhine and the Danube; on the east, the Euphrates; on the south, Upper Egypt, the deserts of Africa and Mount Atlas; on the west, the seas of Spain and Gaul.[2] After seven centuries of war, interrupted only by two very short intervals, Augustus had closed the Temple of Janus.[3] The whole world was at peace, but the peace was only among men, for all men seemed to have united against God.

In the city of Rome itself, with the birth of each child, the helpless little one was laid at his father's feet, and he was allowed to live only if it pleased the parent's whim or fancy to accept him.[4] This legalized child-murder, Rome had borrowed from Sparta, and it was finally abrogated only in the time of Constantine.[5] In Rome, too, the father of the family exercised the right of life and death over his wife. He could dismiss her when she grew old or lost favor in his sight. So, also, if it suited his pleasure, he might do away with his children, or crucify his slaves. According to the law of the Twelve Tables, an insolvent debtor was handed over to his creditors, to be

[2] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., I, p. 15.
[3] Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist., I, No. 31.
[4] Fouard, St. Peter, p. 292.
[5] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., I, p. 364.

sold as a slave, or cut into as many pieces as he had creditors, should they so demand. Even in the time of Seneca, to satisfy a debt, the proud Roman was obliged to sell his children at public auction,[6] and on losing his liberty, the child became as a beast of burden for the one who bought him. To the master belonged everything that the slave acquired, everything that he was, body and soul: even his honor he might be forced to prostitute for his master's profit.[7] To the stoic, suicide had become almost a moral precept, the deed and sign-manual of a great soul.[8]

In the Roman Provinces and among the Barbarians, conditions were even worse. In Phœnicia, Syria and Carthage, children had been burned alive to Moloch, while human sacrifices in general were common.[9] All sense of decency and morality had been blotted out by the frightful orgies connected with the public worship of paganism.

The condition of even the Chosen People was a sad one. True it is, that after the return from the Babylonian Captivity, as a nation they had not relapsed into idolatry. But as all prophecy had ceased with Malachias, four hun-

6 Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, I, No. 6.
7 Allard, Les Esclaves Chretiens, Bk. I, cc. IV, V.
8 Seneca, Epist., LVIII, LXX, LXXVII; de Provid. VI.
9 Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, I, No. 6.

dred and fifty years before the Incarnation, the Law or God had become obscure and distorted as a consequence of the efforts of the Scribes to build up a system based on so-called traditions or human precepts, which superseded and oftentimes nullified the great truths contained in Divine Revelation. Opposed to the Scribes, were the Sadducees, who rejected all traditions, and professed to adhere to the bare essentials and the letter of the Law. Mere materialists, imbued with the spirit of the heathens round about, they denied the spirituality and immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and many other essential doctrines. The Pharisees, who were for the most part drawn from the ranks of the Scribes, were characterized by their narrow, hypocritical spirit, marked by unbounded hatred and vindictiveness. From the year 175 B. C. there had been no legitimate succession to the office of High Priest. The office itself was frequently sold to the highest bidder, and the incumbent was often changed at the slightest whim or fancy of political leaders.[10] Only by a few chosen souls was the knowledge and true service of God preserved. The people, as a whole, did not want a redeemer from sins, but a deliverer from the galling and oppressive yoke of foreign

[10] Meschler, Life of Christ, I, pp. 11-13.

domination. They promised themselves a secular ruler, an invincible conqueror, who should place them at the head of all nations.[11]

Yet, even amid this nauseating squalor of vice and shameless degradation, the poor stifled protest of the souls of men, with their innate urging to go to God, had not been entirely hushed. The spirit of discontent and self-reproach was but an outcry of the sin-burdened soul. The diabolical ingenuity of their lusts could not satisfy the cravings of the proud Roman for something, he knew not what, but which he sought in vain amid debasing pleasure. The scholar and the sophist strove without avail to evolve a system of philosophy or mode of thought that would satisfy this yearning of the soul. All other gods failing to supply religious need, the cultured Greek was forced to consecrate his altar to the Unknown God,[12] in the hope, perhaps, that as he could not fathom his soul's craving for the great Unknown, the God, Himself unknown, unnamed and lost in the realm of possibilities, might gratify perchance this impulse that could not be analyzed by him or expressed in terms of thought. The Epicurean left the festal board after vain effort to satiate in a carnal way a longing for pleasure that could find no

[11] *Ibid.* p. 15. [12] Acts, xvii, 23.

fruition within the scope of sense gratification. The famished, hunger-stricken children of the forest or desert-waste were wandering aimlessly hither and thither, not so much in quest of food, as in a hopeless effort to ease the soul's urging for what could not be realized upon earth. So, too, with the barbaric hordes in the great wastes of the North-East, that were seething in mighty unrest, out beyond the pale of civilization, and gathering force by numbers, to surge down and in time wrest apart the proud Empire of Rome. In their savage, brutal way, they were giving voice to the insatiable impulse of the soul that reached out blindly for the God they knew not, and while groping in the darkness of error, demanded unerringly the pleasure and happiness which this world can never yield. And this same spirit of unrest and discontent, with irresistible force urged on the entire chaotic and ruthless mass of humanity to inundate the earth with blood and lustful crime, thus seeking hopelessly to gratify the demand of the soul they could not comprehend, since the world could never fill the void caused by the absence of sanctifying grace.

An ancient chronicler thus explains the spiritual exaltation of the early anchorets of the Thebaid. "God created man with an

insuperable desire for happiness, for He created him after His own image. He gave the soul of man the capacity to know Him, to love Him, and to possess Him, and an immense magnitude which can be filled with nothing short of an immense good: that is to say, by God. Contentment in God is its truest, highest happiness." [13]

Theologians argue from this insatiable craving for happiness on the part of the human race, to the absolute necessity of a future state of being commensurate to the aspirations of the soul. Father Hontheim thus sums it up. "We are born for higher things, for the possession of God. This earth can satisfy no man, least of all, the wise. 'Vanity of vanities,' says the Scripture;[14] and St. Augustine exclaimed: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is troubled till it rests in Thee.' " [15] And in this exclamation of attachment, St. Augustine voices the attraction of every human soul toward its Creator.

It was amid the mad confusion of the world, the inevitable consequence of sin, that God raised up a chosen soul, an immaculate Virgin, exempt from the first instant of her conception from the effects of the disobedience of our first

[13] Fathers of the Desert, p. 381. [14] Eccli., 1, 2. [15] Cath. Encycl., VII, Heaven.

parents. We might observe in passing, that Tertullian[16] voiced the opinion, that in the formation of the bodies of Adam and Eve with all their complex perfection, Almighty God expressly had in view the sacred humanity of Christ as the Exemplar of His handiwork. With a like prevision, then, when the curse of God descended on the human race, she who was to be the Mother of the Christ, was exempted from the law of sin. From the very first instant of her being, was she to be "full of grace." [17] It was her Motherhood of God, that, from eternity won for this chaste soul the unique privilege of being conceived immaculate. It was her exalted dignity of being the Mother-elect of Christ that preserved this child of Joachim and Anna from the slightest taint of sin.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Mary had early been consecrated to the service of God, and had spent much of her youth in the Temple of Jerusalem, sharing with other virgins in the work connected with the House of God, and leading withal a prayerful life in the acquisition of every virtue. Her humble home in Nazareth remained unnoticed by the great ones of the earth. When, then, the hour came, in accordance with the law of her people, that

[16] Tertull. De Carn. Christi, VI. [17] Luke I, 28.

she, as an heiress-daughter of the House of David, should enter an alliance with a man of the same royal line, she yielded to this precept and became betrothed to a lowly carpenter of her native town, not, however, without the saving clause that this betrothal was not to contravene the vow of virginity she had pledged to God.

When Nabuchodonosor, king of Babylon, humbled the Chosen People in the year 606 B. C., among the first to be led into captivity was a youth of the royal blood of the Kings of Juda. Finding favor in the sight of his captors, he was one of those chosen to be brought up in the royal palace, and became so renowned for wisdom and knowledge, that "As wise as Daniel," became a proverb among the Babylonians.[18]

It was in the sixty-ninth year of his captivity that Daniel knelt in prayer and made confession of the iniquities of his people, and rehearsed the justice and mercy of the Most High. "Now therefore, O our God," he concluded: "hear the supplication of Thy servant, and his prayers: and show Thy face upon Thy sanctuary which is desolate, for Thy own sake. Incline, O my God, Thy ear, and hear: open Thy eyes, and see our desolation, and the city

[18] Ezech., XXVIII, 3.

on which Thy name is called: for it is not for our justifications that we present our prayers before Thy face, but for the multitude of Thy tender mercies. O Lord, hear. O Lord, be appeased: hearken and do: delay not for Thy own sake, O my God: because Thy name is invocated upon Thy city, and upon Thy people." [19]

While he was thus speaking and beseeching God in behalf of the exiles of Sion, the angel Gabriel appeared to him, and assured him, that, as a consequence of his prayer, the term set for the Babylonian Captivity had been shortened, and that the hour now approached when the exiles should return to their beloved Jerusalem. The divine messenger then added: "Know thou, therefore, and take notice: that from the going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem again, unto Christ the Prince, there shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks: and the street shall be built again, and the walls in straitness of times. And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain: and the people that shall deny Him shall not be His. And a people, with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be waste, and after the end of the war the appointed desolation. And he shall confirm the

[19] Dan., IX, 17-19.

covenant with many, in one week; and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail: and there shall be in the Temple the abomination of desolation: and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation and to the end." [20]

As the prescribed days of this prophecy were drawing to a close, another descendant of the Shepherd King, the lowly Maid of Nazareth, knelt in prayer. She, too, perhaps, bemoaned the infidelities of her Nation, and acknowledged the mercy and justice of the God of her people. Possibly, she had been meditating on the very prophecy of Daniel, and with the Prophet had cried out in supplication that the hours of exile be shortened and that the Lord might hasten His coming.

Josephus, the Jewish renegade, in his *Wars of the Jews,*[21] speaks of "an ambiguous oracle, that was also found in their sacred writings; importing that about this time one from their country, should become governor of the habitable earth." The Roman historian Tacitus[22] records the same general expectation, while Suetonius[23] assures us: "Throughout the whole East there was a long cherished and firm belief that about this date the empire of the world

[20] *Ibid.*, 25:27.
[21] Bk. VI, C. V, No. 4.
[22] Tacit. Hist., V, No. 13.
[23] Suet. Vespes., IV.

would devolve upon a man born in Judea." In fact, as Alzog remarks, "amid the prevailing and universal confusion, men sought comfort and hope from the oracles which were preserved in the Sibylline Books, and which announced that the human race would one day rise to a higher and holier state, and again return to the early age of happy innocence." [24] And again, "It should not be forgotten that the confines of the Roman Empire almost bordered on those of China, that friendly relations existed between the two nations, and that as the Romans . . . expected the Holy One from the East, so did the Chinese await His coming from the West." [25]

Mary, during the years spent in the Temple, had come to know by heart the Law as well as the Prophets, and the prophecy of Daniel was like an open book before her. No vague oracle or Sibylline utterance here, but the specific enumeration of the weeks of years, that must needs be fulfilled. Her pure mind, undefiled by any allurements of the world, could weigh prophetic words and fathom their meanings more accurately than those purblind interpreters of the Law, proud Scribes and Pharisees, who would distort the word of God

[24] Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist., 1, No. 27.
[25] *Ibid.*, No. 31.

Himself, to further selfish and carnal purposes. Moreover, her spotless soul, in closest harmony with her God and Maker, untainted as it was by shadow of fault or imperfection, could sense the whisperings of grace and read aright the inspired page, while the pagan sages, struggling in the midst of most degrading vice and shameless sin, could only grope in darkness and make their speculations in vaguest terms regarding the meaning of their oracles.

Mary, then, knew beyond a doubt, that the advent of the Christ was near. When motherhood was the ambition of every other Jewish maiden, and countless were the cherished hopes of each and every mother in the line of David, that a son of hers might prove to be the Chosen One to lead the Children of Israel to worldly triumph, the lowly Maid of Nazareth had precluded, as she thought, all possibility of being the Mother of the Christ, by offering to God her vow of virginity. And yet, as she prayed, there in the little house at Nazareth, she may have reminded the God of Israel that the years prescribed had been accomplished, that the time was now ripe for the coming of the Christ, as she sought to hasten by her prayers, be it by an hour or a day, the advent of the Promised One. It was, we may imagine,

at this very moment, that Gabriel once again came as messenger to the House of David.

Listen to the words of Father Meschler: "Daniel's weeks of years drew to a close. The preparation was made; the earthly home of the Eternal Word stood ready, inviting the Son of God by its beauty and charm. Then, at last, the moment came—that moment most important and significant for time and eternity—the end and conclusion of all history, the fulness of time, the moment in which the Eternal Word was made man. The mystery is so great, that we must choose the most simple words to represent to ourselves its purport." [26]

What more simple, then, and truly beautiful and inspiring in its very simplicity, than the narration as left to us by the Evangelist St. Luke? "And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for

[26] Meschler, Life of Christ, 1, p. 78.

thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David His father and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel, answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her." [27]

Lucifer, in the first instant of his being, was allowed to foresee in prophetic vision the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity made Man, and he was called upon to do Him reverence. But in proud rebellion, he refused to pay homage to a nature lower than his own, even

[27] Luke 1, 26-38.

when that nature was hypostatically united to the Divine, and so he was hurled down to eternal perdition.[28] Gabriel, as Father Roothaan well remarks,[29] "knew that human nature was about to be raised to a high degree of glory. However, considering only the glory of God and his own obedience, with what a heart did he not fulfill his mission!" How he must have yearned to cast himself at the feet of the humble Maid, and in the instant of her "fiat," he fades away and leaves the Mother of God engrossed in prayer.

"And what does Mary do?" asks Father Meschler. "No word, no smile from her; no self-complacence. She is silent and wrapt in thought; she is afraid, as it were, at her own greatness and beauty, which are revealed to her for the first time. What a depth of wisdom and humility such conduct presupposes! Eve did not act thus, nor Lucifer. Their privileges and greatness were a stumbling-block to them. Not so in Mary's case. The more she is praised, the more she retires into herself and her lowliness, doing nothing rashly. What a sterling, humble heart, what an earnest mind, to be found in a young maiden of but fifteen years." [30]

[28] St. Bernard, Serm. 17 in Cantic.
[29] Retreat at Vals, 1848.
[30] Meschler, Life of Christ, 1, p. 82.

We may well ponder over the conclusion of Father Clare:[31] "Immediately the angels crowd in adoration around their King, and are overwhelmed with amazement to contemplate Him thus uniting under the Divine Personality of the Word the two natures: the nature of God and the nature of man, the finite with the infinite! Here we find our King giving us an example of how we are to establish the Kingdom of His Father, by an astonishing act of humility and self-annihilation. 'Emptying Himself, taking the form of a servant, formed in the likeness of men, and in the habit of a child of Adam,'[32] through the renunciation of His own will. 'Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not.'[33] 'In the head of the Book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will; O my God, I have desired it and Thy law in the midst of My heart.'[34] 'And having joy set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame,'[35] thus taking the offensive against pleasure, honor, and sensual love. We, too, have pledged ourselves to follow Him in all this. With St. Peter we have engaged to go whithersoever He goes. Yet, alas, how often have we been guilty of falling short of this holocaust, of violating our engagements, and of

31 Clare, Science of Spir. Life, p. 176.
32 Philip., II, 7.
33 Hebr., X, 5.
34 Ps. XXXIX, 8.
35 Hebr. XII, 2.

refusing to learn the first lesson which He teaches us in this mystery of the Incarnation—self-abasement and sacrifice. Not once only, nor at the outset merely, but throughout all the days of His mortal life, from the rising of the sun to its down-setting, did He continue to inculcate it in the ever-adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, and in the Holy Eucharist, wherein this mystery of the Incarnation is continued, expanded, and applied to us."—"He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord. He hath given food to them that fear Him."[36]

Thus, in the little House at Nazareth, began the great crusade for souls, the fulfilment of the prophecies, that had for centuries foretold the coming of the Promised One, the Saviour of the world,[37] the Prince of Peace,[38] the Emmanuel, "God with us."[39] Here, too, was accomplished the prophecy of Daniel: "I beheld, therefore, in the vision of the night, and lo, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and He came even to the Ancient of days: and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power, and glory, and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve Him: His power is an

[36] Ps. CX, 4.
[37] Is. LXII.
[38] *Ibid.*, IX, 6.
[39] *Ibid.*, VIII, 8.

everlasting power, that shall not be taken away: and His kingdom, that shall not be destroyed." [40]

Almost in ecstasy, Father Faber cries out: "It was an awful moment. It was fully in Mary's power to have refused. Impossible as the consequences seem to make it, the matter was with her, and never did free nature exercise its freedom more fully than did she that night. How the angels must have hung over that moment! With what adorable delight and unspeakable complacency did not the Holy Trinity await the opening of her lips, the 'fiat' of her whom God had evoked out of nothingness, and whose own 'fiat' was now to be music in His ears, creation's echo to that 'fiat' of His at whose irresistible sweetness creation itself sprang into being! Earth alone, poor, stupid, unconscious earth, slept in its cold moonshine. . . . God in a created nature sate in his immensity within her bosom, and the eternal will was done, and creation was complete. Far off a storm of jubilee swept far-flashing through the angelic world. But the Mother heard not, heeded not. Her head sank upon her bosom, and her soul lay down in a silence which was like the peace of God. The Word was made flesh." [41]

[40] Dan., VII, 13-14. [41] Faber, Bethlehem, pp. 68-70.

When Pope Innocent III, at the Fourth Lateran Council, was informed of what is known to-day as the Children's crusade, he cried out with a groan: "These children put us to shame; while we are buried in sleep, they are courageously flying to the defense of the Holy Land." [42]

It was in the year 1212 that a simple shepherd lad, named Etienne, started the movement in the village of Cloies, near the castle of Vendome, in France. In a letter addressed to the king, he announced that the Saviour had charged him to preach a crusade of children. Endowed with a natural eloquence, as he passed through cities and towns, Etienne drew to himself numerous followers, and the miracles he is reported to have worked at Saint-Denis gave to his appeal so great an authority, that not only did children in ever-increasing numbers leave home and friends, to enlist in this new Crusade, but the King himself was sorely in doubt as to how he should view this movement on the part of the little ones.

Like wild-fire the impulse spread through Europe. Everywhere imitators of Etienne sprang up, and youthful preachers gathered bands around them and set forth to join the

[42] Alzog., Univ. Ch. Hist., II, No. 221.

shepherd lad of Cloies. Not youths alone, but maidens of tender years, and adults, too, hastened to take the Cross in this new Crusade.

Wheresoever they passed, the people gave them hospitality, and their numbers rapidly increased. When asked whither they were going, they replied: "Toward God! We go to find the holy Cross beyond the seas. The Most High has called us to Jerusalem to the relief of the Holy Land."

Despite the opposition of parents, and eventually the open prohibition of the King of France, Etienne with several thousand companions at length reached Marseilles. Here, they were basely betrayed by two merchants, who secretly purposed to sell them into slavery, but ostentatiously offered to transport them beyond the seas, gratuitously and for the love of God. The band actually set sail in seven large vessels. Two of these were wrecked near the Isle of St. Peter, with the loss of life of all on board. The other ships were guided by the traitors to where the Saracens were awaiting them, and the unfortunate children were sold as slaves to the infidels.

At a later date, Pope Gregory IX erected a church on the shore of the Isle of St. Peter, to mark the spot where the two ships had been

wrecked. This edifice he dedicated to "The New Children Innocents" and had entombed there the bodies that had been thrown up by the sea, as the relics of martyrs who had sacrificed their lives for the Faith.[43] Little Etienne, despite the failure of his project, was sincere in purpose, and may well lay claim to the martyr's crown.

Whatever the divine purpose in this strange outburst of crusading fervor on the part of the little ones, whether it was to stir up in their elders a renewed spirit of generous response to the appeals of the Holy Father, or to put to shame the worldy princes, whose petty bickerings and unseemly jealousies prevented a united front against the common foe of Christendom, certain it is, that the shepherd lad of Cloies exercised more than a human influence on the minds of men during the stirring days of the Children's Crusade, and the name of Etienne must go down in history closely associated with that of another child of France, the saintly Joan of Arc.

After foretelling how the Assyrians should be a rod for punishing Israel, but that a remnant of the Chosen People should be saved, the Prophet Isaias went on to speak of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and in his

[43] Hurter, Hist. du Pape Innocent, III, Vol. II, pp. 426, seq.

prophetic vision, he declared: "The calf and the lion and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them." [44]

In the wondrous moment when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, the Divine Crusade was set on foot. Only the lowly Maid of Nazareth was cognizant of the arrival of the little Child who should lead this great campaign for souls. Only the Mother's ear, attuned as it was to the slightest whispering of grace, then heard the invitation, "Come. Follow Me." But the hour for the fulfilment of the eternal decree has come. The prophecy of Isaias has been accomplished. Henceforth, a little Child shall lead them, the God Incarnate in the form of a helpless babe.

Sin-steeped souls, hardened by the wrongs of life and embittered by the world's contempt, will gradually yield to the gentle influence of this little Child, and by Him be drawn to penitence and God-given peace. Chaste, unblemished children of grace will be preserved to innocence and brought to heights of angelic purity by the example of this little One, begot of Virgin Mother, herself immaculately conceived. Proud, ambitious spirits will learn humility from this self-abasing Child of Mary, and like other Xaviers be led to the ends of the

[44] Is. xi, 6.

world in quest of souls. And all of us, without exception, in turn must feel the earnest invitation, and give ourselves more fully to the service of this Word made Flesh, who as a little Child would lead us on to do great things in His cherished Crusade for souls.

CHAPTER III

The Call to Arms

IT IS an accepted opinion with theologians, that in the very instant of the Incarnation, there were presented to the Word made Flesh all possible ways of redeeming man, and that it was left to the human will of Christ to then make choice, freely and deliberately, of whatsoever manner He would in which He was to accomplish His work as Saviour. It was with a prevision of what this choice was to be in time, that the eternal decree of the Godhead had gone forth before all ages, and it was in conformity with the determination of the Christ as yet unborn, that prophecy after prophecy foretold His suffering and His death.[1]

In accordance with this view, the human will of Christ, in its very inception, freely made choice of the path in life the Master was to tread, and selected each detail and circumstance, which we now find recorded in the Gospel Story. He came to earth in quest of

[1] Meschler, Life of Christ, I, p. 101.

souls, and He selected the means best calculated to widen and make effective the work of man's redemption and eternal salvation.

Bishop Stang aptly remarked: "The history of paganism is stamped with a contempt for man. It is a history of haughty selfishness and cruel indifference toward the neighbor. A poor man was regarded as a social nuisance, as an evil to be avoided or removed. There was no sort of an institution or society in all the heathen world for the relief of the poor and wretched; their condition was utterly hopeless." [2]

This fact, perhaps, gave rise to the beautiful concept in the mind of St. Bernard; "Poverty was not found in heaven; it abounded on earth —but man did not know its value. Therefore the Son of God longed after it, and came down from heaven to choose it for Himself, to make it precious to us.

Is it to be wondered, then, that poverty was chosen by the Christ as the keynote of His life, and that, as we shall later see, He has made it the foundation stone of the spiritual life of the Law of Grace?

"And it came to pass," the Evangelist tells us, "that in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world

[2] Stang, Pastoral Theology, No. 48, No. 1.

should be enrolled."[3] Commenting on this passage, Father Coppens observes: "The pagan emperor who ordered the census, no matter what was his motive, was an agent of Divine Providence to bring the Holy Family to Bethlehem. His order had been issued three years before; it arrived at Nazareth just at the right time for God's purposes."[4] Truly, as St. Paul writes to the Romans: "To them that love God all things work together unto good."[5] So the decree of the Roman Caesar becomes the means of the fulfilment of the Holy Scriptures in regard to the birth of Christ.

We might here remark in passing, that for the numbering of his people, David was sorely afflicted by God,[6] while the Pagan Caesar not only numbers his subjects with impunity, but thereby becomes God's instrument in the carrying out of the prophecies. What may be but a trifle in a worldling, nay perhaps even free from the slightest fault, may assume an altogether different character in one of God's chosen people.

St. Luke continues: "And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of

[3] Luke II, 1.
[4] Coppens, Spir. Exerc. of St. Ign. p. 70.
[5] Rom., VIII, 28.
[6] II Kings, XXIV.

David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child." [7] Tertullian, who was born 160 A. D. refers to the census rolls wherein had been inscribed the Sacred Name, as being in existence in his time, [8] and St. Justin [9] is also witness to the enrolment of the Christ in the register of the Empire, having with his own eyes gazed on the Holy Name inscribed among the subjects of the Caesar of Rome.

The soul of Christ, it should be remembered, exercised its faculties in their perfection from the first instant of the Incarnation. The Child, though yet unborn, was fully conscious of all the hardships of the journey. He was setting forth, that His birth might take place in the city of David, that to the throne of David He might lay claim, establishing the Kingdom that is to know no end, [10] and thus set on foot His irrresistible campaign for souls.

That men, to the end of time, might respond to His invitation to come and play a part in the salvation of others, He chooses now to give to all an example, and to lead the way in every want and suffering, that drooping spirits may ever find strength and courage

[7] Luke II, 3-5.
[8] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, I, No. 10.
[9] Justin, Apol., I, 4.
[10] I Paral., XVII, 12.

from the realization that they do but follow in the footsteps of the Christ.

King Wenceslaus of Poland, we are told, went barefooted one bitter cold winter's night, to visit the Blessed Sacrament in the different shrines of his Capital. A nobleman, who accompanied him, began to complain of the excessive sharpness of the cold and the biting blast. Wenceslaus placed his companion behind him, and bade him keep close, and place his feet in the prints that he himself was leaving in the snow. Thus acting as a bulwark against the storm, with his own body the king shielded his faint-hearted follower, who soon began to notice that a pleasant warmth rose from the frozen foot-prints of the monarch, and pervaded all his members, so that he no longer felt the cold.[11] With a like all-consuming charity and love, was choice made by the Christ as yet unborn. From the hour of His birth to the shameful death upon the Cross, He would shield His followers from the bitterness of the storm. He would Himself lead the way, and blaze the trail, only asking His companions to follow close, and tread in the imprints of His feet, that the gentle warmth of love divine might stimulate their numbed

[11] Chaignon, Sac. Med., I, p. 426.

and drooping spirits, and renew their failing strength and zeal.

During Sobieski's hurried march to the rescue of Vienna in 1683, triumphal arches along the route bore the words that were being uttered by every tongue, *"Salvatorem expectamus,* we await our savior." [12] No such glad acclaim welcomed the Christ as He set out for Bethlehem, to begin the work of the salvation of the world. Unheralded, unnoticed, He passed along the road, hidden even from the eyes of men.

"The journey," as Father Meschler takes care to note, "was fairly long, four days and a half at least, and brought many discomforts with it. Their way led either by Sichem, Bethel and Jerusalem, or along the banks of the Jordan by Jericho and Jerusalem to Bethlehem. It was in the month of December, during which it can be bitter cold in the mountainous districts of the Promised Land, with west wind, rain and snow. . . . They traveled humbly, as became people of the working class. Others drive; they walk; everyone outstrips them, and they give place to all." [13]

The arrival at their journey's end, of the weary travel-stained Scions of the royal line

[12] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. IV, p. 379.
[13] Meschler, Life of Christ, I, p. 125.

of David, cannot be better described than in the words of the same author. [14]

"So Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem. Perhaps the setting sun was just lighting up the white rows of houses on the hills, as Mary and Joseph, with their ass, approached the little town, coming through the terraces of vineyards; and in all probability they first directed their steps to the inn for travelers. But the inn was already occupied, and the town full of strangers. By many a house may the little family have passed, seeking shelter, and at many a door may St. Joseph have given a humble knock—they were overlooked in the crowd, or coldly repulsed. In the meantime the evening was drawing in; the doors closed, and no lodging was found. So at last they turned their steps away from the little town, outside of which St. Joseph knew of a kind of cave, a shelter for animals. They arrived at it, tired out, and settled themselves to rest for the night—and to wait for the ever-memorable hour of Our Lord's birth. In the East, certainly, it is nothing unusual to pass the night or even to live entirely in caves and grottoes; the inner part of the dwelling is often hewn out of the rocks; but in the present instance this sojourn has something infinitely touching

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 126-128.

about it. They are the holiest, the best and the highest of God's creatures, and they are so inhospitably lodged, everything is so unprepared, so poor and desolate, whilst the little town there, with its lights, stately houses, and the extensive palace built by Herod, offers hospitable reception and the comforts of home to hundreds of less worthy persons. They are the heirs of the House of David, and Bethlehem is the town of David; the Bethlehemites, descendants of Hur and Mary,[15] of Booz and Jesse, do not take them in, but let them seek shelter where the animals find theirs, outside the town. What a touching contrast! They were God's nearest and dearest, and yet God Himself seems to forsake them and not to think of them. He provides for all others on this evening, but for them nothing is prepared, not even the barest necessaries, and that after a long journey and on a winter evening. There seems scarcely to be a Providence for them.

"And how did Mary and Joseph bear the trial? Certainly quite in the spirit of Our Saviour. It was the first slight and humiliation that He met with in this world. The world does not want Him, does not know Him, because He does not come as it had expected

15 Exod., xvii, 10; xxiv, 14; I Paral., iv, 4.

Him to come. The little Heart of Our Saviour rejoices at this, and He imparts His thoughts and sentiments to His parents. Assuredly it was only with reluctance that they had asked hospitality, because they feared to be troublesome. They knew how to excuse every refusal; full of gentleness, patience and charity, they left the little town, and only God knew of their quiet sadness. This is the second shadow that the Cross and Mount Calvary cast over Jesus and Mary. It was the first meeting of the Messias with His people, with His own, His fellow-citizens of Bethlehem, and they received Him not.[16] In the East, hospitality is otherwise as common as the flower of the field; only for God it does not seem to exist. He receives no hospitality, either at His birth or at His death."

"So the holy night drew on, apparently insignificant as any other night, and wrapped Bethlehem and the world in its shades. The nations under the scepter of the Roman rule, and the pagan world, wearied with its earthly and sinful work, lay down to rest as usual, and had no suspicion how near their God was. Except for the dreary consciousness of sin, the weariness of earthly strivings, and the universal peace which had at last succeeded

[16] John, I. 11.

to the cruel wars, there was scarcely any preparation made by the human race for the visible coming of God. Only there in the poor cave Joseph and Mary watched by the dim light of a little fire. They are the praying heart of the world. So it was, and so it is. The world does not know God, does not think of Him. There must always be holy, chosen souls, who form the point of contact between Heaven and earth. Their prayers, their supplications, their longings are the clock of the divine counsels.[17] This was the case here with Joseph and Mary. They certainly passed the night in prayer, and as Mary had once drawn the Son of God down from the bosom of His Heavenly Father by her longing, so now the same longing allured Him from her own womb."

Let us now return to the Gospel Story, as told by St. Luke. "And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night watches over their flocks.

[17] Father Faber.

And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them; and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for, this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will. And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. And, seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this Child. And all that heard, wondered: and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things

they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." [18]

Father Faber gives utterance to a beautiful thought concerning what occurred in the Cave of Bethlehem. "What is about to happen there? It must be differently described according to the view from which we consider it. Angels would say that some of God's eternal decrees were on the eve of being accomplished in the most divine and beautiful of ways, and that the invisible King was about to come forth and take visible possession of a kingdom not narrower than a universe, with such pomp as the spiritual and godlike angels most affect. The magistrate in Bethlehem would say, that, at the time of the census, a pauper child had been added to the population by a houseless couple who had come from Nazareth—noting, perhaps, that the couple were of good family but fallen into poverty. This would be the way in which the world would register the advent of its Maker." [19]

Giovanni Papini in his apology to the Christ, whom, by his early life of atheism and mockery he had so often crucified, in a spirit of penitence and atonement, enters into the abandonment and privations of the Nativity more fully than might be the case

[18] Luke, II, 6-20.

[19] Faber, Bethlehem, p. 104.

with a more faithful soul that had never erred and had become accustomed to the presence of the Nazarene. In portraying, then, his viewpoint of the cave, Papini says: "Jesus was born in a stable, a real stable, not the bright, airy portico which Christian painters have created for the Son of David, as if ashamed that their God should have lain down in poverty and dirt. And not the modern Christmas-eve 'Holy Stable' either, made of plaster of Paris, with little candy-like statuettes, the Holy Stable, clean and prettily painted, with a neat, tidy manger, an ecstatic Ass, a contrite Ox, and Angels fluttering their wreaths on the roof—this is not the stable where Jesus was born.

"A real stable is the house, the prison of the animals who work for man. The poor, old stable of Christ's old, poor country is only four rough walls, a dirty pavement, a roof of beams and slate. It is dark, reeking. The only clean thing in it is the manger, where the owner piles hay and fodder." [20]

Here, then, it was, when all the world seemed hushed in sleep, that Mary, the chaste Maid of Nazareth, was exalted and become the Mother of God, amid such destitution and abject poverty that tradition tells us she was

[20] Papini, Life of Christ, p. 22.

forced to use her veil as swaddling clothes for her new-born Babe, before she placed Him in the manger, and with St. Joseph at her side, adored Him as her God and King. And even as she bowed low in adoration, angelic choirs burst forth in sweetest paean of praise and glad acclaim: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!"

Glory to God! For the Promised Leader in the great Crusade for souls is born. Glory to God! Because already He prepares Himself for the struggle that is to find its climax only on Calvary's Hill, and thence is to continue on, and endure through the Church and the Sacraments to the end of time. Glory to God! Because the Babe of Bethlehem, beneath the weak and shivering form that nestles in the manger, conceals the glory of the Godhead and the majesty of the Divine Nature. Glory to God; yes, glory to God in the highest! Because from the instant of His birth to the end of days Christ sets His followers the example that will nerve them to every sacrifice demanded by their service and loyal co-operation in applying the fruits of Calvary, the salvation of the souls of men.

"And on earth peace to men of good will," proclaimed the angelic hosts. A peace not of

this world,[21] but a peace celestial, a peace divine, a peace with the God-Man to whom we have pledged our word of loyalty and faithful following as crusaders in the wondrous campaign for souls. Truly, a Christ-like peace such as this world can never give. The peace of the heart that throbs in unison with the little Heart of the Manger-King. A peace confirmed by sanctifying grace! The peace of the Christ-one, following in the footsteps of Christ!

To animate the ardor of his followers, Gideon simply set an example of bravery himself. "And he said to them: What you shall see me do, do you the same: I will go into one part of the camp, and do you as I shall do."[22] When John Machabeus was commissioned by his father Simon to advance with twenty thousand men against the troops of Antiochus, "They arose in the morning, and went into the plain: and, behold, a very great army of footmen and horsemen came against them, and there was a running river between them. And he and his people pitched their camp over against them, and he saw that the people were afraid to go over the river, so he went over first: then the men, seeing him, passed over after him."[23] John's heroic example so filled

[21] John XIV. 27. [22] Judges, VII, 17. [23] I Mach., XVI, 5-6.

his followers with enthusiasm that they proved irresistible. In considering these instances of the power of example, Father Chaignon asks: "Is there a Christian, however weak, who, considering how the Saviour lived in poverty, contempt and sufferings, and gave up His very life for our souls, will not be animated with holy emulation, or at least will not condemn his own cowardice?" [24] It is for each one of us to answer this question honestly, in the presence of the Babe of Bethlehem.

In 1745, Charles Edward, grandson of James II, landed from a fishing boat upon the shores of Scotland. When he made himself known to some of the simple country people, they cast themselves on their knees, and said to him: "What can we do? We have no arms, we are poor, we live on oaten bread and till a barren soil." "I will till this soil with you," replied the Prince; "I will eat your bread, I will share your want, and I will bring you arms." They swore to restore the son of their kings to the throne, and made a heroic effort to this end. [25]

It is in this spirit that the New-born King, even from His infancy, makes Himself partaker of all our trials and sufferings, and in

[24] Chaignon, Sac. Med., I, p. 426.
[25] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., IV, p. 481.

His own Person chooses poverty as the badge of service in His great crusade for souls. It is, too, His example and companionship that have nerved so many generous followers to emulate Him and freely lay claim to Christ-like poverty as a pledge of their fidelity.

Statisticians tell us that in New York City, one person in three is the recipient of charity; and that one in ten is buried in the potter's field.[26] But this is not the free-choice poverty of the Christ. This is the poverty of harsh necessity; too frequently the consequence of misfortune, if not of evil habits. The pauper, moreover, is habitually despised by men, but the poor of Christ wins the esteem of even the worldly-minded.

Historians record how the Abbot John of Vaudiéres was sent by Otho the Great on an embassy to the Saracen Emir Abderahman of Cordova. On the day appointed for his meeting with the Emir, the monk was told to appear in court attire. "The poor of Christ," he replied, "have no change of apparel." On learning his reply, the Emir ordered a large sum of money given him. The monk at once distributed it among the poor of Cordova. "I like that monk's firmness," commented the Emir. "Let him come in a sack, if he choose,

[26] Riis, How the Other Half Lives, p. 243.

I shall be no less pleased to see him." [27] This attachment to poverty, even when occasion might seem to justify its easement or curtailment, has ever proved the saving influence exercised on souls by the example of the Babe of Bethlehem.

When Pius VII and Cardinal Pacca were being hurried into exile at Napoleon's orders, as they sat in the carriage, the Pope asked his Minister if he had brought any money with him. An examination of their purses showed that the Pope had twenty-two cents of French money, the Cardinal sixteen. The Holy Father showed these remains of his fortune to General Radet and remarked with a smile: "Of all our principality, this is what remains to us." [28]

Cardinal Gibbons, writing from Rome, February 17, 1870, at the time of the Vatican Council, says of Pius IX: "His table does not cost more than thirty cents a day." [29] And of Clement XI, Sovereign Pontiff at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is recorded: "He lived so simply that the daily expense of his table did not exceed the value of fifteen cents, French currency." [30]

What wonder, then, that a layman of our own time should emulate the example thus set

[27] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., II, p. 589.
[28] *Ibid.*, IV, p. 563. [30] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., IV, p. 405.
[29] Gibbons, A Retrospect of Fifty Years, p. 52.

by Christ's Vicars upon earth? Of Arthur Griffith it was said: "He lived among his people, always poor to the end, never knowing or caring for comfort or sufficient clothing, or sufficient food; it was no uncommon thing for him to dine on what four-pence could buy." [31] And Griffith, at the time, was President of the Irish Free State!

This man, at least, had learned the secret of Bethlehem's Babe. By this little Child was he safely led through all the mazes of life, and his position of trust and honor was only the occasion of greater exactness and self-abnegation. Wealth made no appeal to him. Ease and comfort, he ever spurned. The angels had warned the shepherds, that they would "find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." [32] This was to be a sign whereby they might recognize the Christ. Through poverty, then, and constant privations of self, did Arthur Griffith direct his way, because he knew that this was the path his little Christ had trod.

Poverty and suffering attended Our Saviour at His birth. Poverty and suffering accompanied Him through life. And the sufferings of Calvary gave way only to the most abject poverty and destitution of the Crucified, who

[31] Studies, Sept., 1922, p. 339. [32] Luke, II, 12.

was dependent on charity for even the winding sheet of burial.

Father Faber has well remarked: "The law of the Incarnation is a law of suffering. Our Blessed Lord was a man of sorrows, and by suffering He redeemed the world. His Passion was not a mystery detached from the rest of His life, but only the fitting, congruous end of it. Calvary was not unlike Bethlehem and Nazareth. It exceeded them in degree; it did not differ from them in kind. The whole of the Three-and-Thirty Years was spent in constant suffering, though it was of various kinds and not of uniform intensity. The same law of suffering which belongs to Jesus, touches all who come nigh to Him, and in proportion to their holiness envelops them, and claims them wholly for itself." [33]

[33] Faber, Foot of the Cross, p. 15.

CHAPTER IV

The Response

FATHER FABER, speaking of the Babe of Bethlehem, observes: "These five things stood like spiritual presences around His crib, waiting for His coming, Poverty, Abandonment, Rejection, Secrecy and Mortification. Alas! We must be changed indeed before such attendance shall be choice of ours! Yet have they not been evermore the sisters of all the saints of God?"

"There was something, therefore, in these five things, which expressed the character of the Incarnate Word. They portrayed His human sanctity. They were a prophecy of the Three-and-Thirty Years. They foreshadowed the spirit and genius of His Church in all ages. They reversed the judgments of the world, and were the new standards according to which the Last Universal Judgment was to be measured. They were in themselves a revelation; for the ancient Scriptures had but very dimly intimated them, and the philosophy of the heathen had not so much as dreamed of them. Even

now, what are all heresies, which concern holy living, but a dishonoring of them? Asceticism is part of the ignominy of the Cross; and modern heathenism turns from it with the same disdain which the elder heathenism of Greece and Rome showed for it in the days of the persecuting Caesars. Yet these five things not only contain the peculiar spirit of the Incarnation and embody its heavenly characteristics, they also express the character of God Himself, and throw light upon the hidden things of His Divine Majesty. Is not created poverty the true dignity of Him whose wealth is uncreated? Shall He, whose life has been eternal independence and self-sufficing beatitude, lean upon creatures? Can the very thought of comfort come nigh to the Omnipotent and not dishonor Him? Silver and gold, diamonds and pearls, houses and lands, all these things surely would have seemed more truly ignominies to God, than the reproaches of Sion or the cruelties of Calvary. It was enough that He abased Himself to lean upon the sinless beauty of His mortal Mother and owe to her the possession of that which He had Himself created." [1]

Why should we wonder, then, that the Church, the Spouse of Christ, and the cus-

[1] Faber, Bethlehem, p. 135.

todian of the sacramental channels of grace, should share the fate of the Babe of Bethlehem? As the world hated and persecuted the Christ, the hatred and persecution of the world must no less be the Godly portion of the Church of Christ.

During the Summer of the year 32,[2] some eight or ten months before His Passion, our Divine Saviour, directly in response to Peter's profession of faith, constituted him the rock on which He would build His Church. St. Matthew, in his narration of the event, continues: "Then He commanded his disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again. And Peter, taking him, began to rebuke Him, saying: Lord, be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee. Who turning, said to Peter: Go behind Me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto Me; because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men. Then Jesus said to His disciples: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." [3]

[2] Maas, Life of Christ, No. 84. [3] Matt., xvi, 20-24.

Here we have the first clear prediction of the Passion, after Christ's many miracles have confirmed the faith of the disciples, and drawn forth their loyal acknowledgment of His Messianic claims. And it is well to note how our Divine Saviour intimately connects this prediction with His promise to found a Church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.[4] Moreover, while He shows to His disciples, that He must go to Jerusalem to suffer, He further implies that this role of sufferer must be the prerogative of His Church as well. For, if Peter, who is to be the head of the Church and Christ's Vicar upon earth, would gainsay the Master's warning, he does but play the part of Satan, and becomes a scandal and a stumbling-block. But, not only must the Church be prepared to suffer with her Christ in the fulfilment of her office, but the same badge of suffering must of necessity mark the true follower who aligns himself with the dear Crucified in the crusade for souls. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." [5] There is no other way of associating oneself with the Christ.

History proves that the Church has not been recreant in her heritage of suffering. As

[4] *Ibid.*, 18. [5] *Ibid.*, 24.

the Spouse of Christ, she has accepted His evaluation of things temporal and eternal, and she will glory in the Cross until her stewardship of souls is at an end. Her response to her dear Crucified has been a generous and devoted embracing of the Cross, both for herself and for her children. In the Cross only does she glory, and only in the Cross does she find her rest.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles of the first persecution of the infant Church.[6] Peter and John, after curing miraculously the beggar at the Gate Beautiful, were standing in the porch of the Temple and preaching the resurrection of Christ. They were apprehended by the Jewish leaders, and cast into prison, to give answer on the morrow to that same assembly which had so short a time before compassed the death of the Expected of Israel. When the Council had assembled, the first question addressed to the Ministers of the Gospel was a demand to be informed by what authority and in whose name they thus dared to act without the approval of the political power of the nation. In vain did Peter break forth into that marvelous protestation of faith in the Nazarene whom they had crucified.

6 Acts, IV.

Equally useless was it to point out to these deicides, that there was an authority higher and more binding than their own. It was but time wasted to set before them the divine commission to preach the word of God. Utterly unable to cope with arguments inspired by Truth itself, and wishing to deceive the public mind as to the real issues at stake, these purblind sycophants of worldly greatness must needs satisfy themselves with dire threats and charge the Apostles, henceforth to speak no more, nor dare to teach again in the name of Jesus Christ.

But with sublime truth the Apostles repeated: "If it be just, in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye." [7]

And as Peter and John departed thence, and came to the little band of faithful, they heeded not the threats and warnings directed against them by the Council of the nation. And the first Christians listened eagerly to the narration of what had occurred, and bursting forth in holy unison into a hymn of praise and glorification, they took up the words of the psalmist, saying: "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the people meditate vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes assembled together against the Lord and His

[7] *Ibid.*, 19.

Christ." [8] They acknowledged in the persecutions of Herod and Pontius Pilate only the verification of the Scriptures that had been fulfilled. And so they encouraged one another to speak the word with confidence, and, despite the heavy hand of persecution, to bear all joyfully, while carrying out the behest of God, prescribed though it was by the highest authority of their people. Then, even as they thus exhorted one another, the house wherein they were assembled, trembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with confidence.[9]

Amid persecution and suffering was the Church of Christ instituted, and amid persecution and suffering has she held her onward course through all the centuries since. The political forces that have vainly striven to stay her progress, have crumbled away, and she has risen triumphant over their ashes. For, as the seventh angel of the Apocalypse sounded his trumpet, did not the Sage of Patmos hear great voices in heaven crying out: "The kingdom of this world is become our Lord's and His Christ's, and He shall reign forever and ever." [10]

The little community at Jerusalem, the first

[8] Ps. II, 1-2. [9] Acts, IV, 31. [10] Apoc., XI, 15.

fruits of Pentecostal zeal, was not long permitted to remain in peace. Cast forth from the city, and fleeing from the hatred of the persecutors who strove to crush the rising Church, that chosen band of zealous converts to the Christ became scattered far and wide through Palestine and Syria and all the adjacent Provinces. Everywhere they went, they carried along the good tidings of the Gospel, and where but yesterday a single flock alone responded to the voice of Christ, to-day as if by magic a hundred Christian communities have sprung up on every hand. Why need we wonder, then, that at a time when every faithful soul bore Christ upon his lips as well as in his heart, when every follower of the Nazarene had accepted the divinely instituted condition for discipleship and held himself in readiness to endure all harshness for the Holy Name, that the leaders in the work could not restrain their burning zeal to spread still farther unto the nations slumbering in darkness the word that was to bring salvation to mankind. So it is, we see those apostolic men hastening to encounter death itself if thereby they may advance the progress of the Church through all the then known world. Withersoever they went, whether in the crowded marts

of provincial towns or before the Roman Caesar himself, when silence was imposed and the sting of the lash was given as a warning of what might be expected if they again preached the Crucified, their watchword kept ringing forth ever the same: "Why do the Gentiles rage, and the people meditate vain things?" And though they triumphed in their blood, still was the victory theirs. And they reckoned not the cost, remembering that Christ had given them an example, that as He had done to them, so they also were in turn to do.[11]

The Jewish Council had thought to blot out the nascent Church. Yet, ere their course of life was spent, many an aged Rabbi stood witness of their folly. Proud Jerusalem was humbled in the dust; her Temple but a mass of smouldering ruins; her people, hung upon their gibbets as food for birds of prey. Israel was no more, but Christianity was daily gaining strength. Truly, the warning of Gamaliel had been fulfilled. They had sought to overthrow the work of God, [12] and in their fury had fought against the Omnipotent Himself, and God had proved the victor.

The conquerors of Jerusalem, in their turn, conceived a hatred for the growing Church. But, while the streets of Rome were lit by

[11] John, XIII, 15. [12] Acts, V, 39.

human torches, and the sands of the arena were being crimsoned by the blood of countless Christian martyrs, beyond the banks of the Danube a mysterious power was urging on the barbaric hosts with a wild impulse that was eventually to find expression in the fierce Alaric who confessed: "A voice ever cries within me. Go, and destroy Rome." [13] The angry roar of the beasts of the Colosseum was taken up by those no less ferocious hordes, hovering on the borders of the Roman Empire, who were ere long to vindicate the Christian martyrs, and then, after rending apart the mighty power of Rome, were to submit themselves to the gentle influence of the yoke of Christ, and build upon the ruined wastes of Europe a fresher and purer civilization.

Christ had led captivity captive, [14] and as the Church came forth from the catacombs, she raised upon the ruins of the Caesars a new and fairer city, and there upon the spot thrice sanctified by martyr blood, rose the Capital of Christendom.

Father Guggenberger thus briefly reviews the rise of the Rome of the Pontiffs. "On December 19, 69, A. D., in the midst of a civil war, a Roman hand fired the Capitol, and the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, with the sanc-

[13] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., I, p. 555. [14] Ps. LXVII, 19.

tuaries of Juno and Minerva, were consumed by the flames. Eight months later, a Roman soldier threw a firebrand into the Temple of Jerusalem and reduced it to ashes. Thus passed away in less than a year the two greatest places of worship in the world, the religious centers of Judaism and Paganism. The Roman Empire, sinking lower and lower, was finally overrun and overthrown by barbarian invaders. On its ruins Teutonic tribes established a commonwealth of Catholic nations, founded Christendom. The Rome of the Caesars, still the central city of the world's history, became the Rome of the Popes.[15]

From that day to this, through all the vicissitudes of time, the power of Christ's Church has spread, and dominated the minds of men, and purified their lives. Yet, not without its measure of suffering has each point been gained. Not without a bitter and oftentimes sanguinary struggle has gone down each foe who thought to check the onward progress of her course. Not without the washing of their garments in the blood of the Lamb, [16] have the emulators of the early Christians laid claim to true discipleship with the Crucified.

"Through many tribulations we must enter

[15] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, I No. 13.
[16] Apoc., XXII, 14.

into the Kingdom of God," [17] for the spirit of the world must needs rise up against the spirit of the Church. But, "seeing it is a just thing with God, to repay tribulation to them that trouble" [18] His chosen flock, as St. Paul assures us, woe betide the nation or the individuals that strive to shatter that firm edifice built upon the rock by Christ Himself, and destined to the end of time to prevail against the assaults of Satan and all his minions. One great despoiler of the Church, himself confessed this truth. For, when Victor Emmanuel, as the reluctant tool of masonic hate against the Church, made his entrance into Rome, he was heard to say: "This is the overthrow of the house of Savoy." [19] And, at a later date, truthfully did he exclaim, while gazing at the Vatican, which held Pope Pius captive: "There is a prisoner here in Rome who is not the Pope." [20] His reference was to himself. How could it be otherwise? When reviewing the events of history, he found that no less than forty-five Popes had been driven out of Rome or shed their blood in martyrdom, or never gazed upon their See. Yet, with the death of each, another pastor was raised to the vacant

[17] Acts, XIV, 21.
[18] II Thess., I, 6.
[19] Poland, Kingdom of Italy and Sov. Pont., p. 4.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

primacy to lay claim to his own. One hundred and seventy-one times had the Sovereign Pontiff been forced to depart from Rome, only to have the oppressor's power crumble away and leave the city once again beneath the benign influence of its lawful Masters.[21] A prey to nine invasions, thrice sacked and twice reduced to ruins, the eternal city has ever owed its restoration to the Popes.

In 452, when the self-styled "Scourge of God" was directing his barbarous hordes, bent on the destruction of the city, it was Pope St. Leo I, surnamed the Great, who went from Rome and boldly faced the destroyer at Mantua. And Attila was so overawed by the appearance and words of the Sovereign Pontiff that he forthwith returned to Pannonia where shortly afterward he died. Three years later, the same Pontiff met Genseric outside the walls of Rome, and saved the citizens and captives from slaughter and torture, though he could not prevent the unsparing pillage and havoc wrought in the city by the Vandal hordes.[22]

The diadem of Rome may be a crown of thorns, and yet, with thorns men crowned the King whose Kingdom will endure to the end

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[22] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, I, No. 82-87.

of time. Why should we marvel, then, at the repeated onslaughts against the Church? Why do the weaklings tremble, as if the waves of persecution could shatter the rock on which we stand? For, unto Peter only was it said: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." [23]

Turn back the pages of history, a little over a century, and mark the time when the genius of Napoleon had reached the zenith of its greatness. The Spring of the year 1809 found the Emperor of the French practically the master of Europe. Kingdom after kingdom had been annexed to his domain, and crown after crown had been bestowed on relatives or trusty favorites. Of all the potentates of Europe, one man alone could stand up and cry: "Thus far and no farther canst thou trespass on my rights." One man alone could stay the encroachments of the French. One man alone could bid defiance to Napoleon's arms. And that one man was none other than the defenseless monarch of the Vatican, whose Heaven-forged instruments of war could smite where steel had failed.

Napoleon's ambition had long been piqued by the presence on the Continent of one who

[23] Matt., xvi, 18.

held a position more exalted than his own. He, who could make and unmake empires at will, could little brook a master even in things spiritual, and so he strove to dictate to the Holy Father, Christ's Vicar upon earth, the policy of the Church committed to his care. The seventh Pius, anxious for peace at any cost, sacrificed every point which his conscience could permit, but there came a time when he, too, had to take his stand and repeat the cry of Peter: "If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye." Not to be gainsaid, the mighty Napoleon issued from the imperial palace of the Austrian whom he had just humiliated to the dust, his decree that was to transform the Papal States into a French dependency. And when the rumor of his pending excommunication reached him, it was with mirthful scorn that he wrote to Eugene Beauharnais, the Viceroy of Italy: "What can Pius VII effect by denouncing me to all Christendom? He can lay interdict upon my throne; he can excommunicate me. Does he think this will make the muskets fall from the hands of my soldiers? He would have nothing left to do, then, but to cut my hair and shut me up in a monastery." [24]

Two years later, the haughty Corsican, at

[24] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., IV, p. 560.

the height of power, followed by 650,000 men, set out on the disastrous Russian Campaign, that was to sound the death-knell of all his ambitions. He had under his orders eight monarchs who came to pay court to the Emperor as he passed through Dresden. When he returned to Paris in disordered flight, the Grand Armée was reduced to 20,000 men, wandering, needy, starving, without sufficient clothing and without their arms. An eye-witness thus describes the retreat. "All turned against them, even their weapons. They seemed an insupportable weight to their numbed and frozen arms. In their repeated falls, the muskets fell from their hands, were broken or lost in the snow. When they rose, it was without their arms; for they did not throw them away, hunger and cold snatched them from their grasp. The fingers of many of them froze upon their pieces, and thus deprived them of the motion necessary to preserve a little remnant of heat and life." [25]

Was it, moreover, a mere coincidence, that the fallen Emperor was abandoned by his Marshals at Fontainebleau, the last prison of Pius VII? [26] And were the privations and hardships of his exile at St. Helena less irk-

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 571.
[26] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, III, No. 334.

some and galling to his proud, unbending spirit, than would have been the restraints of monastic life, at which he had so freely scoffed? He had bidden defiance to the Christ through the person of His Vicar upon earth, and the Nazarene had straightway accepted the challenge term for term.

When Alexander III came to Venice in 1177 to sign the treaty with Barbarossa, he thus addressed the deputies of the Lombard cities, his faithful allies: "Well-beloved sons, it is a miracle of God's power, that an aged and unarmed priest should have resisted the rage of the most powerful king on earth; by this let all men know, that it is impossible to war against the Lord and against His Christ." [27]

Again, when the French Directory demanded of Pius VI that he should recall the Brief condemning the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the Holy Father replied: "We look upon the crown of martyrdom as far more glorious than that which we now wear." [28] In the same spirit, while a prisoner at Savona, Pius VII made answer to the direct threats of Napoleon: "I shall lay these threats at the foot of the crucifix, and give my cause, which is His also, into the keeping of God." [29]

27 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., III, p. 281.
28 *Ibid.*, IV, p. 542.
29 Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist., III, No. 391.

A Pilate satisfied the rabble's cry for blood, and ended his exile a suicide.[30] A Victor Emmanuel recognized in his spoliation of the Church, the downfall of the House of Savoy. A Napoleon shattered his power against the rock of Peter, even as the Emperors of Rome had prepared the way for their own ruin. So, too, the enemies and persecutors of the Church in our own days will find that they are forging the weapons that will in time be turned against themselves.

It was the Abbe Combalot, who styled the Church "That anvil on which all hammers have been shattered." [31] The Church will come forth from every new struggle, as in the past, stripped of many dead and rotting limbs, perhaps, but stronger and more vigorous for the battle with the storm, and ready to put forth a more abundant fruit than heretofore.

If at times we grow faint-hearted, let us recall the fact, that when in the vision of the Apocalypse the fifth seal was opened,[32] the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God, "Cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And the answer was

[30] Eusebius, Hist. Eccl., II, 7.
[31] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. I, p. 490.
[32] Apoc. VI, 9-11.

straightway made to them, "that they should rest for a little time, till their fellow servants, and their brethren, who are to be slain, even as they, should be filled up." Thereafter, the inspired John saw the vials of God's wrath poured out upon the world to consume all who bore not the sign of the Lamb.

Consequently, the Church will ever triumph in God's own good time. She must needs pass frequently through her Holy Week. But the lament of the mournful singer of Sion will inevitably yield place to the Exultet of joy and the Easter Alleluia. Of the Son of God Himself, was it not written, that He should suffer, and so enter into His glory? [33]

As the Church herself, so must her faithful children embrace the standard of the Cross and follow in the footsteps of the Crucified, if they would measure up to the expectations of their Leader Christ, who has invited them to share with Him the work of saving souls. Nor have there been wanting at any period of history generous apostles ready to carry on the God-given task. Their portion has been the Cross. Their recompense, has been, perhaps, a crown of thorns. But they have ever made oblation of all they had and all they were, to prove their true loyalty to the cause, in which

[33] Luke, xxiv, 26.

they enlisted, to give evidence, that they were crusaders worthy of the name.

When St. Louis IX, a prisoner of the Sultan of Egypt, refused to take an oath repugnant to his religious principles, he met the fearful threats of the Saracens with the calm reply: "Work your will upon me; my body is yours, but my soul belongs to God." [34] Here was a soldier of the Cross truly worthy of the name!

In the early days of the Church, one of the principal influences for spreading Christianity after the close of the Apostolic era, was found in the prisoners of war, who in Roman bondage learned the beauties and consolation of the Faith, and who, when once they had regained their liberty, hastened to become apostles among their barbarian countrymen.[35] So during all the centuries since, down to our own day, the persecutions that have assailed the Church in various parts of the world, the intermittent proscription of her Religious Orders here and there, with consequent banishment of countless, generous, devoted children of the Cross, have been the God-chosen means not only of spreading the light of faith in other lands and sending forth to the farthest ends of the world missionaries burning with zeal

[34] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., III, p. 374.
[35] Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist., I, No. 62.

for souls, but also of reclaiming many children of error by bringing them beneath the gentle influence of these exiles from home and country, who have left their all to take up the Cross and follow Christ.

How often do we read with zest of Christian warriors and crusading armies? Our hearts are set aglow, and we live again those scenes of chivalry and devotion to a righteous cause, when at the call of Rome, the monarchs of Christendom set aside their petty strifes and discords to unite against a common foe. The enmities of centuries were for a time forgotten, and England clasped the hand of France to serve beneath the standard of the Cross. The haughty Burgundian, entrusting to menials the defense of his ancestral strongholds, joyfully took his place beside the shepherd lad, who in leaving the green fields had sacrificed his all. When the proud masters of the Western Isles gazed back for the last time on the whitened cliffs of Dover, now sinking in the distance; when the flower of Spanish knighthood forsook their sunny hills and fertile valleys; when the rough warrior from the North descended in his might, and freely mingled forces with his gentler neighbors of the South; they one and all were come in obedience to the

call of Rome, in answer to the summons of Christ's Vicar upon earth. A single purpose urged them on. A single cry burst forth from their myriad hosts: "God wills it. God wills it."

The same generous impulse of all-consuming zeal should surge up in every breast to-day, on hearing the Christ-like story of the true crusaders of the Cross, who sacrifice their lives and what they hold most dear, to play their humble part in sharing with the Crucified the task of saving souls.

CHAPTER V

The Plan of Campaign

ABOUT six hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Ezechiel was led a captive to Babylon with King Joachim. It was in the sixth year of his captivity, that he had a vision disclosing the destruction of the famous city of Tyre by Nabuchodonosor, king of Babylon. After announcing the punishment of God that was impending over the city, and sounding a warning to the Prince of Tyre, the prophet continues; "And the word of the Lord came to me, saying: Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the King of Tyre; and say to him: Thus saith the Lord God: Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God. . . . Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise, thy inner parts were filled with iniquity, and thou hast sinned; and I cast thee out from the mountain

of God, and destroyed thee, O covering cherub, out of the midst of the stones of fire. And thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty; thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty, I have cast thee to the ground; I have set thee before the face of kings, that they might behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thy iniquities, and by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, to devour thee, and I will make thee as ashes upon the earth in the sight of all that see thee. All that shall see thee among the nations, shall be astonished at thee; thou art brought to nothing, and thou shalt never be any more." [1]

Ezechiel would here compare the King of Tyre to Adam, the father of the human race. He was created in a special sense to the image of God, and in his innocence was placed in the pleasure of the paradise of God. He was perfect in his ways from the day of his creation until in an hour of weakness he fell from grace. Trade lifted him up to wealth and power. Pride tempted him to commit sin, perhaps to preserve and increase his glory. In any case, it was the multitude of his merchandise, as the prophet expresses it, that ultimately led to his ruin.

[1] Ezech., XXVIII, 11-13; 15-19.

So, too, from the days of the King of Tyre down to our own time, wealth and prosperity have compassed the ruin of many another soul that might have risen to the heights of sanctity in the midst of the poverty and want that marked the birth of the Leader of the Crusaders of the Cross.

The great struggle for souls that is daily going on about us, has been graphically represented by many ascetics and spiritual writers. The whole world may be represented as divided into two camps. To the one, belong those who habitually toil and labor that the interests of the Christ may be furthered, and that souls may be led captive by grace. To the other, must be assigned the co-operators and abettors of Satan's plan to compass the ruin of men, and make void the ransom-price of Calvary. The purpose and intent of these two camps being diametrically opposite, so, too, are the plans of procedure, adopted by each.

In the ordinary course of events, Satan does not urge a man directly to grievous sin, when he perceives that the soul is filled with the love of God, and is honestly seeking to co-operate in the work of Calvary. His plan of campaign is rather that of a most experienced tactician. He would begin by having us successful in our financial ventures, and would

assist us in honestly acquiring a modicum of creature comforts, that gradually we may become inordinately attached to them. Even in the case of those who have foresworn the world, and by their vow of poverty closely attached themselves to the service of the Master in the religious life, he would have recourse to the subtle device. The creature-comforts allowed by rule; the provision for present needs, such as food, fitting raiment and shelter, as well as an assurance for the future that no millionaire can guarantee himself; all constitute true riches in the case of each Religious. Satan, then, would have him become inordinately attached to these same honest and legitimate creature-comforts; so attached, in fact, that should he for one cause or another be deprived of them, he would forthwith lose his peace of soul.

This, then, is usually the first downward step in the case of Religious and worldling alike. An inordinate attachment to the honest riches or legitimate creature comforts of their state. There is no question of real sin as yet. The attaining of the object of the attachment has been perfectly free from blame. In fact, its very acquirement may have been most commendable and deserving of praise. The attachment itself, though inordinate, is rather a

weakness of nature than a sin in the strict sense of the word. It is at most, as a rule, an imperfection or a slight defect.

The next step in the plan of Satan is an easy one. A man has every right to his reputation and fair name. To seek the esteem and honor of our fellow men of itself is praiseworthy. At times, even, our influence for good demands that we safeguard and protect ourselves against maligners and defamers. However, it can easily come to pass, that we may become inordinately attached to legitimate fame and honor. Once Satan has effected our first step downward, he straightway would lead us to the second step, which extends our inordinate attachment from riches and creature comforts to honors, preferment and reputation. So that, should chance or even malice attack our fair name, or deprive us of some position of distinction, we again lose our peace of soul. And once Satan has induced us, so to attach ourselves to the honors and preferments of our state of life, it is only an easy step to pride. And the proud man may be brought to any crime. "For pride is the beginning of all sin: he that holdeth it, shall be filled with maledictions," as Ecclesiasticus takes care to warn us, "and it shall ruin him in the end." [2]

[2] x, 15.

The Divine plan of campaign is diametrically opposed to the schemes of Satan. Christ, by His example, would lead us first of all to spiritual poverty; that is, detachment from wealth and all that money represents. In the case of Religious, it means detachment from the creature comforts legitimately afforded by rule, so that, if by any chance, or perhaps necessity, real want or privation is felt, there will be no murmuring or repining, but rather joy at tasting a little of the poverty and want of Bethlehem.

When a man has once become detached from riches or creature comforts, no matter what his position in life may be, no matter what exalted station or elective office he may hold, grace divine would lead him to detachment from it all and teach him resignation, should honor, fame or reputation be snatched from him. And such a man is already on the threshhold of humility, and the humble man will safely climb to the heights of sanctity.

Humility, then, is the goal to be attained. Humility, Christ-like, awe-inspiring humility. The humility that in its obedience to the directive force of grace can speak of victory,[3] the victory of the Crucified.

An old chronicle relates how St. Anthony,

[3] Prov., xxi, 28.

the Hermit, saw in vision the whole world overspread with a thick net, and understood that this signified the snares the devil lays for all men. "Alas," he cried, "will no one then escape from them?" A voice made answer: "Yes, he that is humble."[4] However, as no man falls into grievous sin of a sudden, neither can we hope to attain to true humility in a day. To reach it, we must first learn real detachment from all riches and creature-comforts, and then detachment as well from honor and preferment.

Our Divine Saviour had set out on His last journey to Jerusalem, about a month before His Passion. As He passed along the way, He was approached by the head of a local synagogue, a young man of high rank and noble character. St. Luke thus relates the incident. "And a certain ruler asked Him, saying: Good master, what shall I do to possess everlasting life? And Jesus said to him: Why dost thou call Me good? None is good but God alone. Thou knowest the commandments: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness: Honor thy father and mother. Who said: All these things have I kept from my youth. Which when Jesus had heard, He said

[4] Fathers of the Desert, p. 244.

to him: Yet one thing is wanting to thee: sell all whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. He, having heard these things, became sorrowful; for he was very rich. And Jesus, seeing him become sorrowful, said: How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it, said: Who, then, can be saved? He said to them: The things that are impossible with men, are possible with God. Then Peter said: Behold, we have left all things, and have followed Thee. Who said to them: Amen, I say to you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." [5] He might have added that, leaving all and following Him, they are to attain in this life to the peace that He alone can give, the peace and contentment of a truly humble, contrite soul, detached from all things earthly, and finding its rest, its happiness in a close personal attachment to the Crucified, not, how-

[5] XVIII, 18-30.

ever, without the assurance that as they suffer with Him, with Him also shall they share in the glories of the resurrection. Hence it is, that St. Luke's narrative immediately goes on with the third and final warning of the approaching passion.

Many there are, who under the grace of God habitually aim at perfection according to their state of life. They honestly seek to leave all and follow the Master, not perhaps by actually casting aside their liberty of action, but by becoming detached from their riches and possessions, using these gifts of God purely for the Master's glory. The pages of the martyrology are crowded with the names not merely of saintly clerics and holy Religious, but especially of the children of the world of every age and station. Many kings to-day are venerated as saints, and they share the glory with more than one abandoned beggar. Old people and little children, devotees of the arts and searchers into the mysteries of science, professional geniuses and lowly tradesmen—all have furnished the names of chosen souls who have attained to sanctity by learning humility through the steps of complete detachment.

Those who have turned away from sin and have applied themselves seriously to the pur-

suit of the higher virtues, no matter what their condition or state may be, have pledged themselves to follow in the footsteps of the Master. To attain to eternal salvation, is their one professed purpose in life. They want to go to God, and they have come to realize that to reach Him, they must follow along the very path that He has trod.

However, all do not set themselves to the realization of this purpose in life with the same determination and generosity. Some there are, who, while professing to seek eternal life, are unwilling to remove the impediments that block their path. They are fully conscious of their inordinate attachment to wealth—be it the fortune of the worldling or the legitimate creature-comforts of the Religious—yet they will do nothing to overcome this dangerous affection, which is the first step in the downward course.

Many others there are, loud in their profession of devotion to Christ, and persistent in their protestation that they want to go to God, who are ready to make every sacrifice except the very one that is essential to the removing of the inordinate attachment. While in the former case we might well question the veracity of the man who claimed that he really wanted to go to God, and yet, realizing the

danger of the inordinate attachment, would do nothing to remove it; in the present instance, we must doubt the sincerity of one who still proclaims his unalterable purpose of reaching God, despite the fact that he refuses to adopt the only certain means of doing so.

But even in the world, and among men submerged in wealth and material cares, are to be found chosen, generous souls, so imbued with the purpose of going to God, which ultimately is all that sanctity demands, that as soon as they discover any attachment to creatures that could jeopardize the fulfilment of their purpose, unquestioningly they cut off this attachment no matter what the cost. With this aim in view, bishops have set aside their miters, and kings have renounced their crowns, and thousands of generous souls have turned their backs on worldly fame and political favor to seek in hermitage or monastery the pearl of priceless worth. And religious souls in turn, have sacrificed the little comforts and conveniences legitimate in themselves, to be the more like the Babe of Bethlehem in poverty and abandonment, and seek perfection in their state of life.

We have in Holy Writ many telling examples of these three classes of men; all loud in their profession of attachment to the Master;

all eager to follow, that they may attain to life eternal; but, varying in due degree of readiness to remove the particular obstacle, the particular attachment, that stands between them and the fruition of their plans.

In the month of September, 32, A. D., our Divine Saviour bade farewell to His loved Galilee and turned toward Jerusalem that the work of man's Redemption might be accomplished. "And it came to pass," as St. Luke relates, "when the days of His assumption were accomplishing, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. And He sent messengers before His face; and, going, they entered into a city of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. And they received Him not, because His face was of one going to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John had seen this, they said: Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? And, turning, He rebuked them, saying: You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save. And they went into another town." [6]

The Samaritans were looking for the Kingdom of God. They were expectant of the Messias. They clung, however, most tena-

[6] IX, 51-56.

ciously to the error of their tradition, that Mount Gerizim and not Jerusalem was the place for the adoration of Almighty God.[7] Many of them, no doubt, were sincere, God-fearing men. Their souls were crying out to go to God, but they would not even receive the Christ, who might have convinced them of the Truth, and rectified their false impressions. They belonged to that class of men who would seek the end, and yet do nothing to secure the necessary means.

St. Luke immediately continues: "And it came to pass, as they walked in the way, that a certain man said to Him: I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. Jesus said to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. But He said to another: Follow Me. And he said: Lord, suffer me first to go and to bury my father. And Jesus said to him: Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou, and preach the kingdom of God. And another said: I will follow Thee, Lord; but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house. Jesus said to him: No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." [8]

[7] Maas, Life of Christ, No. 91. [8] IX, 57-62.

All these men desired to follow the Master. The latter two certainly for unselfish reasons. They were prepared to accept the conditions of discipleship, even to becoming homeless outcasts. Nay more, the excuses offered for delay seem not merely plausible but in themselves commendable. However, the narrative implies that one had an inordinate attachment to his dead parent, the other to the relatives and friends at home. They would do much for the Master, they would go far in His service, but they held back on the one point that would have made them true, devoted followers.

How different the responses of the apostles! Let St. Mark described for us the incident. "And passing by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother, casting nets into the sea (for they were fishermen). And Jesus said to them: Come after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And immediately leaving their nets, they followed him. And going on from thence a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were mending their nets in the ship; and forthwith he called them. And leaving their father Zebedee in the ship with his hired men, they followed him." [9]

History, too, is replete with examples, that

[9] Mark, 1, 16-20.

bring home to us the same salutary lesson. For instance, when Napoleon was being urged to set up a national church with himself as the head, he exclaimed: "Enough, sir, enough; do you also ask me to have myself crucified?" And seeing that his words were not understood, he continued: "That is not your idea, nor is it mine. Well, sir, that is what must be undergone for the true religion. And beside that one, I neither know, nor wish to know, any other."[10] Yet, the proud Corsican, who did so much for the re-establishment of religion in France, allowed the inordinate attachment to his own petty schemes and unbridled ambitions to pervert him from a defender of the Church into an open and merciless persecutor of the Vicar of Christ. His love of riches, with subsequent love of honors, led him to boundless pride, that could not accept a superior even in matters spiritual.

Constantine, on the other hand, was prepared to go far in the establishing of the rights of the Church. However, he could not conform his private life to her norm of recitude and morality, and so was withheld from becoming a true follower of Christ until under the shadow of death.[11]

10 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., IV, p. 552.
11 Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, I, No. 39.

How different the example of Alfred the Great, who reigned as King of England from 871 to 901. Physically of a delicate constitution, he ascended the throne at the age of twenty-two and seemed ill-fitted to cope with the Conquering Northmen who were practically masters of his realm. Forced to remain in hiding for a time, little by little he entirely subjugated the invaders, and made good his claim to the Kingdom. During his reign, he gave eight hours daily to sleep and refreshment, and divided the rest of the time into equal parts; one was dedicated to the service of God, including daily Mass, devotional exercises, deeds of charity, writing, etc.; the other half to the cares of government. He made a similar division of his yearly income; one half for the Church, education and charities; the other for the army, navy and support of his court.[12] On one occasion, in the early years of his reign, the Chronicler tell us, while he "was forced to seek shelter from the Normans and Danes, who overran his realm, in a forest fastness, the hovel of a shepherd was the abode of the royal family. One winter's day, a beggar asked for food. A single loaf was all that there was in the house. On being told, the King exclaimed: 'Thank God! He who with

[12] *Ibid.*, No. 285.

five loaves could feed five thousand men can well supply our need with half a loaf. Give the other half to the poor wanderer.' " [13]

Here was a man who had attained to true humility through complete detachment from all the world holds dear. It was not necessary for him to renounce his scepter and his throne to become a saint, for they had long since ceased to be obstacles to perfection, once he had become the master of Christ-like humility.

So, too, was it with Canute, who at the beginning of the eleventh century was king of Denmark, England, Norway and part of Sweden. One day, while standing on the seashore at Winchester, a flattering courtier addressed him as king of kings and lord of the seas. The Monarch forthwith silently placed his cloak on the sands, where the tide was rising, and seated himself upon it. As the waves rolled nearer, he thus addressed them: "You are subject to my orders; I command you to respect your Master, nor dare to touch his royal person." The courtiers were astonished, and when at last a wave disregarded the royal order, and swept up beyond his feet, the Monarch exclaimed: "You see how the sea obeys its Master. Learn from this the power of earthly kings. The only King of kings is

[13] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., II, p. 535.

the great God who made and rules the heavens, the earth, and all the elements." He then entered the church at Winchester, and placed his diadem on the crucified image of the Redeemer, protesting that He alone deserved the crown, to whom all creatures owe submission.[14] Canute, despite his kingly dignity, had learned humility of soul.

St. Thomas tells us [15] that humility, if considered as a special virtue, especially regards the subjection of man to God, for whose sake, by humbling himself, he subjects himself to others.

According to St. John Climacus, the Fathers of the Monastery of Sinai once discoursing on the subject, said: "Humility is a constant forgetting of our good works; humility is the knowledge of our own infirmity; humility is the feeling of a contrite heart, and the denial of our own will." [16]

Practically, humility consists in self-knowledge, in the intimate appreciation of the nothingness of self as compared with the infinite majesty of God, as well as in the co-ordination of our actions and aspirations with this relationship and its consequent demands.

[14] *Ibid.*, III, p. 41.
[15] Summa, 2a., 2ae. p. 161, art. 1, ad 5.
[16] Climacus, Ladder of Perfection, 25th Step.

Ascetical writers differ greatly in their treatment of the subject of humility, and according to the viewpoint taken, the division into grades or degrees of humility must be adjusted. Were we to consider it in relation to external things, with St. Gregory [17] we might divide it into seven degrees, or perhaps we might go further with St. Bernard [18] who enumerates no less than twelve. As, however, we are about to confine our subject to the interior disposition of the soul, with the author of the Spiritual Exercises we may restrict ourselves to three degrees.

The first degree supposes such a knowledge of self and the bounden relation between the soul and its Maker, that despite an occasional lapse from our ideals, we habitually keep ourselves in such a disposition of mind, that we would not deliberate about the commission of a mortal sin, no matter what might be gained thereby, even were it the preservation of life. Or, as St. Ignatius expresses it: "The first degree of humility is necessary for eternal salvation; it consists in this, that I so submit and humble myself, so far as I can, as in all things to obey the law of God our Lord, in such wise that even though men should make

[17] Gregory, 23 Moral., c. 4.
[18] Bernard, Reb., c. 7.

me lord of all created things in this world, for the sake of my own temporal life I would not enter into deliberation about breaking a commandment, whether Divine or human, which binds me under mortal sin." [19]

The second degree of humility supposes a fuller adjustment of my standard of thought and reasoning to the true relation of creature to Creator, with the consequent obligation of indifference as regards external things, using all as a means to the service of God, my Lord and Maker. It further demands as habitual disposition of soul of such a kind, that not for an instant would I seriously consider the commission of a venial sin even to save my life. Again let us consider the very words of St. Ignatius. "The second degree is more perfect humility than the first; it consists in finding myself in such a state as not to desire nor be more disposed toward riches than poverty, toward honor than dishonor, toward the desire of a long life than a short life, provided only equal service be rendered to God our Lord, and the prospect of the salvation of my soul be equal; and it consists likewise in never entering into deliberation about committing a venial sin, either for the sake of all created things,

[19] Spir. Exerc. of St. Ign., Three Degrees of Humility.

or even if on that account men should deprive me of life." [20]

The third degree of humility constitutes the height of sanctity. Nothing more exalted can be conceived. It presupposes the first two degrees and finds man so consumed with love of God and so desirous of serving perfectly his Lord and Master, that he seeks to model his entire life on the Divine Exemplar. The cry, "Lord, I will follow You withersoever You go," has so inflamed his heart, his intellect has grasped so thoroughly the awful purpose of the poverty and abasement of the Christ on earth, who would give to man an example, and his will has become so strengthened by divine grace, as a consequence of meditation on the Master's life and sacrifices in behalf of souls, that poor, weak, struggling man, abased by self-knowledge, and yet exalted by the realization that the Christ is with him in every action, so loses himself in the Divine contemplation, that his habitual attitude of mind urges him to the closest imitation of and companionship with the Master, who is the way, the truth, and the life.[21]

Since, however, this companionship precludes all attachment to riches, honors or what

[20] *Ibid.*
[21] John, XIV, 6.

is most appealing to human weakness, and generally implies in practice actual want and suffering, such is the predilection of the truly humble associate of Christ, that he chooses poverty with Christ poor, shame and contempt with Christ dishonored and despised, and as far as it is possible loses himself in the intimate union with the Companion of his choice, the homeless Outcast of His people.

Once more listen to St. Ignatius: "The third degree is the most perfect humility; that is when, the first and second degree being included, and the praise and glory redounding to the Divine Majesty being equal, the better to imitate Christ our Lord, and to become actually more like to Him, I desire and choose rather poverty with Christ poor than riches, contempt with Christ contemned than honors; and I desire to be esteemed as useless and foolish for Christ's sake, who was first held to be such, rather than to be accounted wise and prudent in this world." [22]

Is it possible for man to measure up to this sublime norm of sanctity? Not only is it possible, but generous souls have ever had it as the goal of their ambition. Even in the Old Testament, before the example of the Crucified could strengthen drooping spirits and confirm

[22] Spir. Exerc. of St. Ign.

to grace, we find instances of those who perfected themselves in the school of humility. We read in the Second Book of Machabees, how during the persecution of the Chosen People by Antiochus, about the year 167 B. C., "Eleazar, one of the chief of the scribes, a man advanced in years and of a comely countenance, was pressed to open his mouth to eat swine's flesh. But he, choosing rather a most glorious death than a hateful life, went forward voluntarily to the torment. And considering in what manner he was come to it, patiently bearing, he determined not to do any unlawful things for the love of life. But they that stood by, being moved with wicked pity, for the old friendship they had with the man, taking him aside, desired that flesh might be brought which it was lawful for him to eat, that he might make as if he had eaten, as the king had commanded, of the flesh of the sacrifice; that by so doing he might be delivered from death; and for the sake of their old friendship with the man, they did him this courtesy. But he began to consider the dignity of his age, and his ancient years, and the inbred honor of his grey head, and his good life and conversation from a child: and he answered without delay, according to the ordinances of the holy law made by God, saying that he would

rather be sent into the other world. For it doth not become our age, said he, to dissemble; whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, at the age of fourscore and ten years, was gone over to the life of the heathens: and so, they, through my dissimulation, and for a little time of a corruptible life, should be deceived, and hereby I should bring a stain and a curse upon my old age. For though for the present time I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty neither alive nor dead. Wherefore by departing manfully out of this life, I shall show myself worthy of my old age; and I shall leave an example of fortitude to young men, if with a ready mind and constancy I suffer an honorable death, for the most venerable and most holy laws. And having spoken thus, he was forthwith carried to execution. And they that led him, and had been a little before more mild, were changed to wrath for the words he had spoken, which they thought were uttered out of arrogancy. But when he was now ready to die with the stripes, he groaned and said: O Lord, who hast the holy knowledge, Thou knowest manifestly that, whereas I might be delivered from death, I suffer grievous pains in body; but in soul am well content to suffer these things

because I fear Thee. Thus did this man die, leaving not only to young men, but also to the whole nation, the memory of his death for an example of virtue and fortitude." [23]

We have here well illustrated the three degrees of humility. Eleazar's refusal either to violate the law or to give scandal by simulating to eat the forbidden flesh, proves that he had attained to the first degree of humility. The fearless tone of his exhortation which increased his torments, indicates that he possessed the second degree. His closing profession of faith and contentment, gives evidence that he had mastered the third degree.

The Book of the Machabees immediately continues with another example to our purpose, the touching story of the glorious martyrdom of the seven brethren and their mother, all of whom had learned the secret of sanctity from the due appreciation of their own nothingness and the obligations to the Creator of all things.

"It came to pass also, that seven brethren, together with their mother, were apprehended, and compelled by the king to eat swine's flesh against the law, for which end they were tormented with whips and scourges. But one of them, who was the eldest, said thus: What wouldst thou ask, or learn of us? We are

23 VI, 18-31.

ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of God, received from our fathers. Then the king, being angry, commanded frying-pans and brazen caldrons to be made hot: which forthwith being heated, he commanded to cut out the tongue of him that had spoken first: and the skin of his head being drawn off, to chop off also the extremities of his hands and feet, the rest of his brethren, and his mother, looking on. And when he was now maimed in all parts, he commanded him, being yet alive, to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in the frying-pan: and while he was suffering therein long torments, the rest, together with the mother, exhorted one another to die manfully, saying: The Lord God will look upon the truth, and will take pleasure in us, as Moses declared in the profession of the canticle: And in His servants He will take pleasure.

"So, when the first was dead after this manner, they brought the next to make him a mocking stock; and when they had pulled off the skin of his head with the hair, they asked him if he would eat, before he were punished throughout the whole body in every limb. But he answered in his own language, and said: I will not do it. Wherefore, he also in the next place received the torments of the first: and when he was at the last gasp, he said thus:

Thou indeed, O most wicked man, destroyest us out of this present life; but the King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life.

"After him the third was made a mocking stock, and when he was required, he quickly put forth his tongue, and courageously stretched out his hands, and said with confidence: These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God I now despise them; because I hope to receive them again from Him. So that the King, and they that were with him, wondered at the young man's courage, because he esteemed the torments as nothing.

"And after he was thus dead, they tormented the fourth in the like manner. And when he was now ready to die, he spoke thus: It is better, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by Him; for, as to thee, thou shalt have no resurrection unto life.

"And when they had brought the fifth, they tormented him. But he, looking upon the king, said: Whereas thou hast power among men, though thou art corruptible, thou dost what thou wilt; but think not that our nation is forsaken by God. But stay patiently a while, and thou shalt see His great power, in what manner He will torment thee and thy seed.

"After him they brought the sixth, and he, being ready to die, spoke thus: Be not deceived without cause: for we suffer these things for ourselves, having sinned against our God, and things worthy of admiration are done to us: but do not think that thou shalt escape unpunished, for that thou hast attempted to fight against God.

"Now the mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men, who beheld her seven sons slain in the space of one day, and bore it with a good courage, for the hope that she had in God: and she bravely exhorted every one of them in her own language, being filled with wisdom; and joining a man's heart to a woman's thought, she said to them: I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world, that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all, He will restore to you again in His mercy, both breath and life, as now you despise yourselves for the sake of His law.

"Now Antiochus, thinking himself despised, and withal despising the voice of the upbraider, when the youngest was yet alive, did not only exhort him by words, but also assured him

with an oath, that he would make him a rich and a happy man, and, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers, would take him for a friend, and furnish him with things necessary. But when the young man was not moved with these things, the king called the mother, and counseled her to deal with the young man to save his life. And when he had exhorted her with many words, she promised that she would counsel her son. So bending herself toward him, mocking the cruel tyrant, she said in her own language: My son, have pity on me, that bore thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age. I beeseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them; and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also; so thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren.

"While she was yet speaking these words, the young man said: For whom do you stay? I will not obey the commandment of the King, but the commandment of the law which was given us by Moses. But thou that hast been the author of all mischief against the Hebrews, shalt not escape the hand of God.

For we suffer thus for our sins. And though the Lord our God is angry with us a little while for our chastisement and correction; yet He will be reconciled again to His servants. But thou, O wicked and of all men most flagitious, be not lifted up without cause with vain hopes, whilst thou art raging against His servants. For thou hast not yet escaped the judgment of the Almighty God, who beholdeth all things. For my brethren, having now undergone a short pain, are under the covenant of eternal life; but thou by the judgment of God shalt receive just punishment for thy pride. But I, like my brethren, offer up my life and my body for the laws of our fathers: calling upon God to be speedily merciful to our nation, and that thou by torments and stripes mayst confess that He alone is God. But in me and in my brethren the wrath of the Almighty, which hath justly been brought upon all our nation, shall cease.

"Then the king, being incensed with anger, raged against him more cruelly than all the rest, taking it grievously that he was mocked. So this man also died undefiled, wholly trusting in the Lord. And last of all, after the sons, the mother also was consumed." [24]

[24] VII, 1-41.

If all this was accomplished while the terrors of Sinai still directed the minds of the faithful; when once the law of fear had given place to the precept of love, and Calvary had opened up the new economy of grace, how much easier had the acquiring of true, all-sanctifying humility become, since the seeker after perfection, in the service of the Master, does but follow in the footsteps of the Crucified.

We can easily understand, then, the humility of many a Christian king, who has set aside his crown to become an ardent follower of the Christ. In this respect, to quote a recent historian, "Anglo-Saxon England stands unique in history for the number of its royal saints. . . . No less than twenty-six English kings and queens exchanged the pomp of royalty for the poverty of the cloister." [25]

In a like spirit of renunciation and abasement, at the Eighth General Council, held at Constantinople in 869, the Emperor Basil vainly pleaded with the schismatical bishops to abjure their error. "If you so much dread the wholesome confusion, I will give you the example of self-humiliation. Forgetful of my purple and my diadem, I prostrate myself before you. Trample under foot the body of your Emperor: I am ready to do and suffer

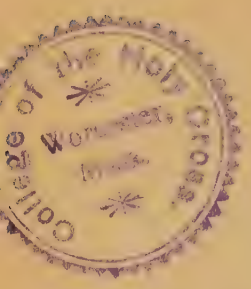
[25] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, 1, No. 102.

anything to restore peace and harmony to the Church, and to procure the salvation of souls." [26]

The Princes of the Church, too, have set many an example of true Christ-like humility. To cite a single instance that will appeal to every heart by its simplicity! After the condemnation of his work, *Maxims of the Saints,* Fenelon, the eloquent and devoted Archbishop of Cambrai, had constructed a golden monstrance, supported by two angels; one of whom was represented trampling under foot several heretical books. One volume bore the title, *Maxims of the Saints,* though none of the propositions condemned bore the stigma of heresy. Rash, mischievous in practice, and erroneous, were the judgments passed upon them.[27] From his own pulpit, the humble Prelate read to the congregation the brief of condemnation, and with tears in his eyes he besought his hearers to refrain from the further perusal of his book. So intense had been his love of God, and so earnest his desire to bring others to a clearer appreciation of this love divine, that he had allowed his affections and sentiment to outweigh his reason, and becoming imbued with a species of quietism,

[26] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., II, p. 518.
[27] *Ibid.*, IV, p. 398.

with him indifference became mere passivity. However, once Rome had spoken, he was the first to conform to the decision, and his complete submission and public reparation more than made atonement for his error of judgment.



CHAPTER VI

True to the Standard

POPE URBAN II, in declaring the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont, showed the assembly a cross and said: "Wear this upon your shoulders and upon your breast; let it shine upon your arms and on your standards: it will be to you the surety of victory or the palm of martyrdom; it will unceasingly remind you that Christ died for you, and that it is your duty to die for Him." [1]

From that hour, the historian tells us, "The Crusader affixed the cross to his shoulder in order that he might offer to Christ cross for Cross, and suffering for suffering, and that by mortifying his desires he might share with Him in the resurrection. On such religious views the conviction was founded that failure and death in this holy war were no less blessed than success and victory." [2]

The same spirit must animate the followers of the Christ in the crusade for souls that is

[1] Alzog Univ. Ch. Hist. II, No. 216.
[2] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, I, No. 439.

going on to-day. For, as Father Lallemant observes, "as Our Lord wrought the redemption of the world only by His Cross, by His death, and the shedding of His blood, not by His miracles or preachings, so likewise the evangelical laborers apply the grace of redemption only by their crosses, and by the persecutions they suffer." [3]

This fact has led a chronicler to remark of that Gregory who earned from the enemies of the Church the title of Hildebrand: "Gregory VII stands out before us among the figures of history, the greatest that has presided over the destinies of the modern world; nothing was wanting to complete his character—the splendor of glory, the renown of great deeds, interested slander, and the full meed of misfortune —that solemn ordeal of virtue and genius." [4]

Well, then, does Father Gihr remark in his scholarly treatise on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, "Only in the glow of fire does incense exhale its sweet odors, only in the crucible does gold acquire all its purity and luster; thus also must we be tested, purified and proved in the crucible of suffering and tribulation, that the fruitful seeds of virtue may blossom in us, and that we may attain eternal joy and glory." [5]

[3] Lallemant, Spir. Doctr., p. 74.
[4] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., III, p. 143.
[5] Gihr, The Holy Sacr. of the Mass, p. 226.

Why should we wonder, then, that sufferings patiently endured for love of Christ, beget the grace of still other sufferings? Paul, waiting in prison in Jerusalem on the eve of his departure for Caesarea under military escort, to be brought in judgment before the Governor Felix, receives a visit from the Christ, to whom he had fearlessly born testimony before the Council of the nation. "And the night following," as we are told in the Acts of the Apostles, "the Lord standing by him, said: Be constant; for as thou hast testified to Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." [6]

This spirit of suffering with its wonderful power of winning souls is well illustrated by another instance from the life of the Apostle of the Gentiles. With his disciples, Paul had come to Philippi, in answer to a vision that invited him to evangelize Macedonia. "And it came to pass," St. Luke relates, "as we went to prayer, a certain girl having a pythonical spirit met us, who brought to her masters much gain by divining. This same, following Paul and us, cried out, saying: These men are the servants of the Most High God, who preach unto you the way of salvation. And this she did many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit: I command thee,

[6] Acts, XXIII, 11.

in the name of Jesus Christ, to go from her. And he went out the same hour. But her masters, seeing that the hope of their gain was gone, apprehending Paul and Silas, brought them into the market-place to the rulers. And presenting them to the magistrates, they said: These men disturb our city, being Jews; and preach a fashion which is not lawful for us to receive nor observe, being Romans. And the people ran together against them; and the magistrates, rending off their clothes, commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the gaoler to keep them diligently. Who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight, Paul and Silas, praying, praised God. And they that were in prison, heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and the bands of all were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the doors of the prison open, drawing his sword, would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying: Do thyself no harm, for we all are

here. Then calling for a light, he went in, and trembling, fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas. And bringing them out, he said: Masters, what must I do that I may be saved? But they said: Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he, taking them the same hour of the night, washed their stripes, and himself was baptized, and all his house immediately." [7]

Truly has St. Paul disclosed in his writings the secret of his marvelous success in the crusade for souls. For, writing to the Corinthians, he declares: "We preach Christ Crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness: but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." [8] And again: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ. For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." [9]

That was the secret of Paul's success as an apostle, and the same holds true for every apostle since. The cross has ever imbued the

[7] *Ibid*, XVI, 16-33. [8] I Cor., I, 23, 24. [9] *Ibid.*, II, 1, 2.

soldier of Christ with spirit and courage to do and die. Lose sight of the cross, and pride quickly puffs up the self-seeker. Some petty affront or humiliation has proven the stumbling block of not a few who might have become great apostles for good and souls, and caused the ruin of many learned and brilliant scholars who gave great promise as defenders of the Church.

Of Tertullian, historians record that his style "recalled the thunders of Demosthenes in the language of Tacitus. It would seem," they say, "that if Logic wanted to choose a style of eloquence, she would select that of Tertullian." "The African Bossuet," others have called him. Until his forty-fifth year, he was the great Catholic apologist of his day, absolutely fearless, and devoted to the cause of the Church. It was Tertullian, too, who first remarked: "A secret power of conversion arose from the blood of the martyrs, which thus became the seed of Christianity."

Wounded pride, however, effected the ruin of this promising soul. "Certain affronts," we are told, "received from inferior or jealous clergymen, personal injuries, of which St. Jerome, who reports the fact, does not mention the nature, but which Tertullian should have despised, in the high position in which his

books had placed him, were the first causes of his lamentable separation. A decree of St. Zephyrinus admitting penitent adulterers to penance, appeared to Tertullian to indicate a relaxation of doctrine. He made it an occasion to consummate his schism." Origen, the other great light of that period of the Church, through exaggerated fervor and zeal was guilty of an excess. Corrected by Demetrius, he humbly acknowledged his fault and publicly disavowed his error.[10] For Tertullian, the cross spelled ruin; for Origen, salvation.

Father Chaignon thus calls attention to the fact that it is the cross that asserts itself as the guiding force in the lives of so many of the chosen ones of Christ. "St. Ignatius Loyola is cast into a dungeon at Salamanca, treated as a malefactor; his hands and feet are loaded with chains. . . . Yet joy lights up his countenance; never was there a man seemingly more contented with his lot. They came from every quarter to see the prisoner, and after admiring his calmness and serenity they retire, exclaiming: We have seen Paul in chains. His friends express compassion at his confinement, and he will accept nothing but congratulations. Let Salamanca know it, I would wish, for the love of Jesus Christ, to be loaded with more

[10] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. 1, pp. 182-187.

chains than they can ever forge. Xavier complains; on what account? Because of the excess of his joys, of the paucity of his trials. Enough, O Lord, enough. Yet more, more labors, contradictions, privations, dereliction by creatures. St. Theresa, separated from Jesus, melts into tears. 'If Thou, O Lord, hast resolved to prolong my exile, if Thou wilt have me wait in patience for that death which all my desires crave, grant me to suffer for Thee as long as I shall not be living with Thee. My cross will console me for Thy absence; either Thyself or Thy cross; either to die or to be born again, to continually bear new sufferings. *Aut pati, aut mori.* Either to suffer, or to die.' When God asks John of the Cross what recompense he will have, he answers, not with St. Thomas, 'None else but Thyself, O my God'; neither does he say with St. Theresa, 'Either suffering or death.' No; he will have naught but suffering and contempt. *'Pati et contemni pro Te.* To suffer and be contemned for Thee.' " [11]

Again Father Lallemant tells us: "St. Ignatius the martyr had the love of crosses and self-annihilation so deeply graven in his heart that, being condemned to be devoured by wild beasts in the amphitheater, he desired that the lions, after tearing his body in pieces, might

[11] Chaignon, Sac. Med., I, p. 405.

also consume his bones; that nothing might remain of the holocaust which he had consecrated to God, in order to prove himself His worthy disciple."[12]

All these holy ones of God had learned to overcome the weakness of nature by following close in the footsteps of the Master. We, too, must draw our strength from the contemplation of the Crucified. We must learn to follow the Christ frequently along the dolorous way that leads to Calvary. It is only by keeping before our mind the sufferings of our dear Exemplar that we can hope to remain true to our purposes and resolves. The attainment of true humility, the safeguarding of humility, Christ-like humility, is possible only, if we imitate St. Paul by knowing none but Jesus and Him crucified.

King Clovis, listening to St. Remigius reading the Passion of Our Lord, cried out; "Oh, that I had been there with my Franks!"[13] No action of man, be he king or peasant, can undo the shame of Golgotha. It only remains for us to co-operate in this stupendous work begun there by the dying Christ. To help us, then, to renewed courage and faithful effort, let us briefly outline the sorrowful journey to Calvary.[14]

[12] Lallemant, Spir. Doctr. p. 74.
[13] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., II, p. 60.
[14] Maas, Life of Christ, No. 169.

It is the noon hour, and in spirit we stand by the Castle Antonia, to the northeast of the Temple Mount, as the mournful procession forms, about a hundred paces to the west of the Ecce Homo Archway. The cry of the rabble has broken down the Roman Governor's resistance. Pilate, at any cost, seeks to preserve his friendship with Caesar. The Jews, to compass the death of Christ, have officially renounced the most sacred traditions of their race, and proclaimed that they have no king but that same Caesar whose friendship means so much to Pilate.

In accordance with custom, the Condemned must carry His cross to the place of execution. As the heavy beam of wood rests upon His shoulder so recently torn and mangled by the cruel lash, it forces the clothing deep into the blood-crusted wounds of back and shoulder alike, and causes an excruciating agony of pain. The signal to start is given. Slowly the Victim for sin totters along some two hundred paces to the westward down the incline of the Tyropaean Valley, and where the way turns toward the south, His body sways for an instant under His burden, and then collapses of a sudden, the Cross crushing down upon Him.

He who has borne the insults and cruel taunts of His persecutors, and permitted the servant of the high priest to strike Him in the

face; He who has made unfaltering the painful journey to the house of Pilate, thence to Herod, and back again to Pilate in the guise of a fool; He who has permitted the atrocious insult of being crowned with thorns in painful mockery, and has sustained Himself by power divine during the unnatural scourging at the pillar; is He losing courage, now that His face is set toward Calvary? Is He about to abandon the final sacrifice? Will He die here upon the public way?

If we could whisper to the prostrate Christ and ask Him the reason of this fall, He might disclose to us the secret of His aching, stricken heart. Perhaps He might tell us that this unwonted weakness is due, not to physical pain and suffering, but to the realization of the countless host who in all times will be loud in their profession of love and prompt in promise to follow Him whithersoever He may lead, and yet who will be satisfied to go with Him only as far as Thabor, and, lingering there, or repining for its splendors, in the hour of shame and suffering will weaken and refuse to come with Him to Calvary, and thus prove false in the work of saving souls. He might remind us of that hour at Capharnaum, when He made promise of the Eucharistic Bread and when, scandalized in Him, many of His disciples walked with Him no more.

He might open our eyes to the followers without number who would be scandalized at the condition laid down for companionship with Him, who would spurn the Cross and shun the ignominies of Calvary; and show us that thus the work of leading souls to Him would suffer untold injury.

With profession of tender love, and true devotion to His Sacred Passion, promising henceforth to be an unwavering and practical disciple of the Cross, let us assist the Master to His feet, and turn with Him along the way that tends to the south.

It is about forty or fifty paces, before we come to a narrow alley-way, that leads out from the Temple Mount.

All during the various trials of the Christ, Mary, His Mother, has knelt in prayer in the House of the Heavenly Father. She has been present in spirit with her Son Divine. Every blow and insult which He has borne has caused physical pain and anguish to the Mother. Every ache and sorrow of the Sacred Heart has found a responsive throb and quiver in the Mother's breast. In her regard, too, the Son has been forced to exercise His power omnipotent, that death may not intervene and prevent His cherished Mother from playing her part in the final hour of sacrifice. But when the vengeful cry of "Crucify Him!" once

prevailed, John, the Apostle of Love, hastened from the scene of condemnation to seek the Mother where he knew that he would find her, on the Temple Mount. Supported, then, by John and Magdalen, she hastened through the little alley to meet her Son upon the way to Calvary. Even as she came out upon the main thoroughfare, the mob of human demons flocking by, her tear-dimmed eyes sought out and found her Christ, at the very instant that He sank beneath the Cross.

How her mother's heart must have yearned to hasten to His side, and take on her own shoulder the burden of the Cross. She is the Mother of God, the Mother of Him who is God and Man in one; and as He hides His divinity beneath that bruised and mangled body, the plaything for the frenzy of the mob and the malice of the rabble, so, too, must she conceal her reverence and her love within her bruised and aching heart, and yield no solace or comfort to her Christ, her Babe of Bethlehem, in His hour of ignominy and insult. She, too, must play her part in saving souls. She, too, must give to men an example to the end of time, an example of devotion to the Passion of her Son.

So it is, that the sorrowful procession draws near her. While her own tear-dimmed eyes are fixed on the sacred countenance of her Son,

a countenance scarcely human in its aspect, smeared as it is with mire and spittle, His poor bloodshot, pleading eyes peer out through matted hair and caking filth, to meet her gaze. Yet, while Mother and Son stand thus face to face, not a word of comfort passes between them; not a syllable of commiseration or comforting love. Mother, no less than Son, would teach us, once and for all, to overcome every human affection, and if need be, to break the ties most sacred, when there is question of saving souls.

As the bedraggled Christ is violently urged along, the Mother hastens to follow in the sad procession. And we, too, may take our places at her side.

It is another sixty paces to the southward, and we reach a point where again the way turns to the west, into a narrow and very steep street. It is impossible for the Christ to drag His Cross up the difficult incline, and Simon of Cyrene is forced to bear a portion of the burden, walking behind the Master. Let us hasten to offer ourselves to take the place of Simon, who feels himself degraded, and is loud in his remonstrance against this public insult. But Christ motions us back. He seems to ask, how we can hope to bear His Cross with Him, if even now we find too heavy the yoke of the duties of our state. If we cannot do our little

bit in seeking for perfection, no matter what our state in life may be, when this perfection means salvation for the souls of other men, how can we ambition to bear His Cross to Calvary? Rather, He bids us follow close and from His example learn to bear our own crosses with greater fidelity and love.

One hundred and ten paces up the hill, and we reach the house of a fearless woman, of the family of Herod. When the disciples of His choice have scattered and fled, and there is none so lowly as to wait upon the Master, Veronica, brave woman that she is, faces the mob and soldiery, and with a towel wipes the disfigured countenance of the Man of Sorrows. For this kindly and heroic act, she receives an evidence of the appreciation of the Christ. For there upon the towel is left impressed an image of the Sacred Countenance. O my dear suffering Master, have you no keepsake to leave with us, to strengthen us in future weakness or temptation? The poor, weary, thorn-crowned head turns slowly, and a message of love is spoken by the eyes of the stricken Christ; "Yes, My children," they seem to say, "I will imprint My Sacred Countenance, not on a towel, but on your hearts, and in your memories, that in every danger and in weakness, you may have remembrance of My Passion, to hold you true."

Another fifty paces, still to the westward, and we come to the city gate, that leads through the second wall to the open country beyond. For the first time, the skull-shaped hill of Calvary comes within our vision. As the Master gazes toward it, for the second time He sinks beneath the Cross. What can be the reason for this second fall? Perhaps as the Christ beholds the place of sacrifice, He realizes that many of the souls for which He is about to die, will spurn the price of blood that He will pay for their salvation; that many of those who will promise to follow His leadership in the campaign for souls, not only will falter and abandon their effort in behalf of other souls, but in the end will actually snatch their own souls from Him, their Crucified. What wonder, then, that He sinks beneath the Cross and, prone there in the dust, gasps exhausted and spent in strength.

Then, slowly struggling to His feet again, He staggers on another fifty paces farther to the west, to a meeting of the ways. Here a group of weeping women have gathered by the roadside, with helpless infants pressed against the breast, and affrighted children clinging to them in fear and trembling at they knew not what. The pitiful cries of the little ones join with the convulsive sobs of their mothers. The Master had no word of comfort for His

own poor weeping Mother, and yet He pauses now to solace these poor stricken ones. "Daughters of Jerusalem," He pleads, "weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." [15] Weep for your children and your children's children to the end of time, He might have added. Weep for the little souls that in all ages, with innate longing will yearn to come to Me, whom they can never know because no one will bring to them the saving waters to wash away the guilt of primal sin. Weep for the countless children who will fall away from grace, victims of godless parents or of bad example, children who would return to Me but for a want of generous devotion to the Cross on the part of some disciple of mine whom I would send to rescue them. Weep, too, for the children without number, My loved and cherished little ones, who will be Mine no more, precisely because some follower of Mine had grown half-hearted in My service, and will not suffer the little ones to come unto Me, though of such is the kingdom of heaven. Truly, weep not for Me. I go willingly and of free choice to die upon the Hill of Shame. Rather weep for yourselves and for your children. For despite My earnest yearning to win all souls, and purchase them with the last drop of My blood, still, not even I can force the free

[15] Luke XXIII, 28.

will of man, for should I do so, God that I am, I would of necessity contradict Myself.

Down to the south we turn, and close by the city wall we hold our way. Seventy paces bring us to the foot of Calvary. Here for the third time, Christ stumbles forward on His face, and the rough Cross presses down upon the prostrate form. Life almost seems extinct. No longer does the dust-stained, disheveled figure move or quiver. What can have thus stricken down the Master at the very foot of the Hill of Sacrifice? May it not be the overwhelming realization that some there will be, whom He will call to be apostles, and yet who will play the devil's part in life? Other Judases, perhaps in ever-increasing numbers, who will betray Him for a price, and prove the ruin of the souls of others. Demons incarnate, who will scandalize the little ones of Christ, or lead astray the weak, and snatch from Him the Crucified, the souls for which He dies.

Let us make promise to the prostrate Saviour, to repair in some small way the work of destruction accomplished by the unworthy apostates from His service. With Him shall we approach the Heights of Calvary, prepared to play our own small humble part in applying the Blood of Sacrifice He is about to shed.

It is only a few steps to the summit of the hill. The Christ can no longer stand upon His

feet, and so the executioners drag Him roughly to the spot chosen for the crucifixion. He allows them to rudely strip Him of His garments, opening again every gaping wound in the sacred back and tearing away with the clothing the last shreds of the ribboned skin; and all this, expressly to teach us, that if we are to assist fittingly at the fearsome drama about to be enacted, we must absolutely strip ourselves, without reserve, of every inordinate affection, and thus attain to the humility of the Crucified.

Stripped of His garments and exposed to ribald shame, the Christ awaits the pleasure of His executioners. The Cross lies ready on the ground. Holes have been prepared in the wood to receive the nails that are to pierce the hands and feet. Ruthlessly they cast the victim down on the Cross. The protruding splinters aggravate the torment of the mangled, bleeding back. A nail is placed against the palm of the right hand; the hammer is lifted up, and the nail crunches home, tearing the delicate hand in a fearful manner. The left hand is stretched out, but it will not reach the spot that has been prepared for the nail. A rope is twisted around the wrist, and strong men pull and strain until the shoulders of the Sufferer are dislocated and the hand is

brought in place.[16] Another nail is driven in, and then the feet in turn are firmly nailed. The Cross with its ghastly Burden is raised aloft, and allowed to settle into the hole that has been prepared for it. And as it sinks down with a sickening thud, the wretched, tormented Victim is almost torn from it despite the nails.

The mocking title is fastened to the Cross. The soldiers' task is done. And they gather round the Cross, to watch and scoff, while the poor Victim of their work hangs in agony upon the tree of shame. He who was so destitute and poor in the hour of His birth, that He was forced as a homeless outcast to be born in the stable of Bethlehem, now in His dying hour is denied by earth so much as a spot whereon to rest His aching head. And yet, even now His only thought is souls, the souls of none other than His executioners. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"[17] is the prayer of the dying Christ. This prayer is not for the Roman soldiery alone, it is for all the deicides who participate in this atrocious crime. It reaches the misguided populace as well as the leaders of the nation. It includes Judas and every apostate apostle to the end of time. It follows every faithless disciple and every man who has turned traitor on his Christ. It is a prayer for each and every one of us who

[16] Ludolph of Saxony. [17] Luke, XXIII, 34.

by our sins affixed the Saviour to the hard wood of the Cross. May the prayer of the dying Christ be uttered not in vain!

Behold your crucified Redeemer! Hearken to the harsh shouts of the rabble. "Vah, Thou that destroyest the Temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it; save Thy own self: if Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross." [18] And the chief priests and scribes vie one with another in mockery. "He saved others; Himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel come down now from the Cross that we may see and believe." [19] "He trusted in God, let Him now deliver Him, if He will have Him; for He said: I am the Son of God." [20] And a soldier takes up the blasphemous refrain. "If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself." [21] Even one of the robbers who had been crucified with Him cannot withhold the taunt: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." [22] But the second robber, whose heart has been touched by the calm and majesty of the Victim of these vile wretches, rebukes the godless utterance of the other, and, turning to the mangled form beside him, prays, "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." [23] Here is a man about to close a life of iniquity. Touched by

[18] Matt., xxvii, 40. [20] Matt., xxvii, 43 [22] *Ibid*, 39.
[19] Mark xv, 31-32. [21] Luke, xxiii, 37. [23] *Ibid*, 42.

the gentle patience of Our Saviour, he admits his own guilt, acknowledges the justice of the punishment, and only pleads for mercy in the life to come. And Christ would show His all-forgiving mercy toward every sinner, with the touching promise: "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." [24]

The gathering gloom has filled the deicides with fear and consternation. Mary, supported by John and Magdalen, draws near the Cross. Christ's eyes are filled with the blood that trickles from the crown of thorns. His lips are white, bloodless, cracking. Only the nail-pierced feet are within her reach, and with her own tears, mingled with those of the Magdalen, the Mother washes away the clotted blood. Present in spirit at the whole Passion, she now takes her station beneath the shadow of the Cross to become the mother of our sorrows. The Apostle of Love but represents the children of sorrow to the end of time, as the Master bows His head, and to His beloved Mother commits the sacred trust: "Woman, behold thy son." [25] After that, He turns to the disciple, and completes the trust: "Behold thy Mother." [26]

The body of man was not primarily intended for suffering. It was made as the companion of the soul. Its ability to suffer is only a con-

[24] *Ibid.*, 43. [25] John, XIX, 26. [26] *Ibid.*, 27.

sequence of sin. The body of Christ, however, was formed expressly that He might suffer, and by the suffering of His body redeem mankind, paying the penalty of every sin ever committed to the end of time. How exquisite must have been the sensitiveness to pain of a body so destined to suffer. As the agony advanced, the excruciating suffering affected not only the body of the Christ, the pain of which now seems to have reached its climax, but also the soul of the anguish-stricken sufferer, now inundated with sadness and desolation at the thought of the countless host in whose behalf He dies in vain. The devil, too, renews the conflict of Gethsemane, showing to Him how He will be abandoned by the very ones whom He has chosen to carry on the work of saving souls, how His graces will be spurned, His leadership denied. Oh, the cry of piteous anguish that bursts forth from the breaking heart of the abandoned Outcast of His People: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" [27] Yet, even in His dereliction, He cannot forget the purpose of this suffering. And so, He gives forth His pleading cry for souls that echoes and re-echoes down all the ages of time, the cry: "I thirst." [28]

The hour of the final sacrifice is approaching. A death-like silence has fallen on the

[27] Matt. xxvii, 46. [28] John xix, 28.

multitude. The last quivering convulsions are passing over the ghastly, mangled form, suspended on the Cross. Christ reviews His labors in man's behalf, and man's ingratitude. The work His Heavenly Father has sent Him to do has been accomplished. It only remains for His Sacred Heart to burst in love for man. Man's ingenuity has thus far failed to compass the death for which he strives. Christ's miracle of love will find a way to accomplish the purpose, and yet proclaim anew His touching forgiveness of His murderers. He is to die of a broken heart. His life, His mission, His unbounded love for men—all are consummated. Well, then, does He make answer to the Heavenly Father, and pronouncement to the world at large: "It is consummated."[29] Can we refuse the pleading eyes of the dying Christ? Is there no responsive impulse of our wretched selfish hearts? Can we not return love for love? Of our life of half-hearted service of the Master, may we not cry: "It is consummated?" May we not make oblation of ourselves and all that is ours to the Christ who dies for us? May we not pledge ourselves to do our little best from this day forth to apply this blood of Calvary, to spend ourselves in purchasing the souls of men?

For the last time, let us turn our eyes toward

[29] *Ibid.*, 30.

the dying Christ. The darkness is becoming impenetrable. The deicides are cringing in fear, and trembling, they grope their way back toward the city. Even the soldiers are hushed in stupefaction. The silence is becoming almost palpable. The bruised lips of the Crucified begin to quiver, and the hesitating words are slowly forming, only to break forth suddenly into a cry of triumph and love, a ringing joyous cry of victory: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." [30] It is the voice of the Son throwing Himself into the arms of His Father. It is the cry of the weary traveler, reaching at length the safe haven of rest. It is a cry that echoes and re-echoes from the Heights of Calvary, rending the rocks and slitting the Temple Veil in twain. Over land and sea it passes, like a mighty thunder, till mysterious voices announce to the pagan world, that the great Pan is dead.[31] Down through the ages of time it passes, sealing the fate of countless souls for all eternity; comforting and consoling the dying hour of Christ's chosen ones, and opening up undying horrors for those who mock the sacrificial blood of Christ.

Whatever our age, whatever our state of life may be, we must go back from Calvary, penitent, chastened in spirit, with renewed courage

[30] Luke, XXIII, 46.

[31] Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist., I, No. 41.

for the morrow's trials. Our God has died for us. Our Christ is crucified. As far as in our power lies, no matter what the cost, what sacrifice it may entail, no single soul will be lost to Him, if our poor effort can avail. No single drop of that blood divine shall be squandered by our infidelity. The blood of Christ must not be shed in vain.

The Persians having captured Jerusalem in 615, they destroyed the church of the Holy Sepulcher, and carried the true Cross to Persia. They then threatened Constantinople itself, and the Emperor Heraclius was on the point of fleeing, when Sergius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and the religious enthusiasm of the people raised his courage to the highest pitch. The army filled with volunteers, eager to reconquer the Cross of Christ. He assumed personal command of the troops, and in six expeditions advanced from victory to victory, overwhelmed the Persians, and subdued lands which no Roman had ever seen before. Nor did he pause until he stood before the Persian capital, where he dictated his own terms, and bore in triumph the Cross of Christ back to Jerusalem.[32]

It is the quest of the Cross, and that alone, that can lead us safely on to victory. It is the memory of Calvary, that must nerve us in the

[32] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. Christian Era, 1, No. 162.

moment of weakness. It is the Sacrifice of Calvary, renewed each day upon our altars, that must strengthen us in the hour of conflict. It is to Calvary, and not to Thabor, that we must turn for help and guidance. Our chosen standard must be the Cross. The Cross, no less, must be the sole object of life's endeavor.

Above the town of Bagnara, in Italy, stands a mountain, the top of which had been cleft in twain by a previous convulsion of nature, leaving an ugly chasm between. But the shock of December 28, 1908, which killed 150,000 human beings and destroyed a great many cities and towns, closed up again the chasm and united the broken mountain-top into a solid mass.[33] The earthquake of Calvary, that witnessed the death of the God-man, witnessed likewise the restoration of the human race shattered by sin, a result in no wise commensurate with the awful price entailed, if judged by human standards. But the God who weighed all in the eternal scales of love, so willed it, that we ungrateful mortals may live again to grace.

[33] London Tablet, Jan. 23, 1909, p. 144.

CHAPTER VII

Victory

THE historian Darras tells us[1] that even in his day, on the right bank of the Bosphorus, the passing stranger might still look with respect upon a noble plane-tree bearing the name of Godfrey de Bouillon carved upon the bark. Here it was that six hundred thousand crusaders were assembled in 1097, and the cutting of the name was in all probability the work of an idle moment.

During his youth, Godfrey had cast in his lot with the impious Henry IV, but was to blot out his sins by his valor and piety in the cause of the Crusades. Proclaimed the first king of Jerusalem, he refused the title, as he accepted the burden of office, and always styled himself simply, Defender and Baron of the Holy Sepulcher. "Never will I wear a crown, in the city where the Saviour of the world was crowned with thorns," was his excuse for setting aside the diadem and royal insignia.

On one occasion, several Emirs came down from their mountains in Naplouse and Sa-

[1] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch., III, p. 167.

maria, to do him homage. They found him seated upon the bare ground unattended by courtiers or guards, and they had come to Godfrey de Bouillon, to greet him as a king. To the expression of surprise elicited by this stateless presence, he replied: "Why should not the earth, from which we sprung and to which we must return after death, afford us a seat during life?" This reply, so Oriental in its lofty simplicity, made a deep impression on the Emirs, and before taking leave they signed a treaty of peace.[2]

Godfrey had learned true humility from the contemplation of the Saviour's Passion, and through his humility, not only did he make atonement for his misspent youth, but he became God's instrument in winning victories spiritual, as brilliant as the triumphs that marked the progress of his banner and the power of his arms upon the fields of battle.

Well might he spurn a crown of gold, where the diadem of Christ had been a crown of thorns. Well might he decline a throne, where the Saviour was satisfied to be raised aloft upon a Cross of shame.

We, too, have stood in spirit upon the Hill of Sacrifice. We too, have purposed to repair our past by devotion, unconditional and complete, in the divine crusade for souls.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

Not on the bark of a mighty plane-tree, along the banks of the Bosphorus, have we engraved our names; but, by our determination of reaching God at any cost, have we inscribed them in the Book of Life.

After these centuries, what has Jerusalem to show to-day as fruit of the zeal and piety of Godfrey de Bouillon? The work of an idle moment is sometimes more productive of good or evil than a life's sincere endeavor. The seed once sown, may bring a harvest beyond the powers of our reaping. The thoughtless whisper may outweigh the orator's harangue. Of the work accomplished as Baron and Defender of the Holy Sepulcher, not a vestige remains to-day as evidence of the generous, devoted effort of De Bouillon. Only the plane-tree stands in testimony to his name.

Our after accomplishments may be forgotten by men. Our record may be lost in the maze of history. No incident of our lives may be preserved. What matters it, provided only that our names remain unerased where we have placed them upon the scrolls of the elect of God?

After His death on the Cross, the burial of the Saviour was necessarily a hasty one. During the Sabbath day the Holy Women busied themselves, as far as the Law would permit, in

making preparations to inter more fittingly the mangled body of the Master.

"And when the Sabbath was past," St. Mark relates, "Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, brought sweet spices that, coming, they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulcher, the sun being now risen. And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And, looking, they saw the stone rolled back. For it was very great." [3]

As we look forward, discouragement may sorely try us. With God's grace we have left our dead past in the tomb of the Saviour. Our one purpose for the future is to do reverence to our dear Crucified, and yet some weakness of character, some evil inclination, that in the past has time and again ruined our good resolves, looms up like a mighty bowlder to keep us from the lowly, humble Christ. And yet, if we push bravely on, as did the Holy Women, angel hands will, if need be, roll us back the stone.

St. Mark continues his narrative: "And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe: and they were astonished. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted; you seek

[3] Mark, xvi, 1-4.

Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen, He is not here, behold the place where they laid Him." [4]

Truly the Holy Women had no need to be affrighted, as long as it was the Crucified that they sought. So is it with ourselves to-day. If we seek the Wonder-worker of Galilee, even to bring to His attention our bodily ills; if we seek the Master who fed miraculously the multitudes in the desert, be it to satisfy the hunger of our souls; if we seek the Christ amid the splendors of Thabor, to gratify our yearnings for the Beatific Vision; the danger of self-seeking, with its concomitant inordinate affections that lead to pride, may occasion just cause for fear and trembling. But while we seek the Outcast of Israel, the poor despised Nazarene, and only seek Him crucified, we have no need to be affrighted.

Each morning, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, after the priest has consumed the Consecrated Host, he bows over the chalice, and quoting from Psalm 115, asks himself the question: "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" Continuing the psalm, he answers his own question: "I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord."

What return, then, shall I, too, make to the

[4] *Ibid.*, 5, 6.

Lord for all that He has done for me? Let the psalmist supply my answer: "I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord before all His people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. O Lord, for I am Thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid. Thou hast broken my bonds: I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the sight of all His people: in the courts of the house of the Lord, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem." [5]

Love, we are told, consists rather in actions than in words.[6] St. Thomas says: "Sincere gratitude for any benefit consists chiefly in esteeming the benefit as it deserves, and in endeavoring to make our benefactor an adequate return." And St. Cyril, "Our actions have a tongue of their own; they have an eloquence of their own, even when the tongue is silent; for deeds prove the lover more than words." This, too, is the doctrine of John, the Apostle of Love, who warns: "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth." [7]

Again, true love supposes an interchange of gifts, or rather, as an old saying has it, "All

[5] Ps., CXV, 12-18.
[6] Spir. Exerc. of St. Ign. Cont. for Obt. Love.
[7] I John, III, 18.

things are common to friends." St. Thomas makes clear his doctrine on the matter when he explains: "There are two kinds of love, the love of desire and the love of friendship, both proceeding from a certain realization of the unity that exists between the lover and the object of his love. For when a person loves something with a love of desire, he regards it as a part of his well-being. And in the same way, when a person loves another with the love of friendship, he wishes that it should be well with his friend just as he wishes that it should be well with himself. And so he regards his friend as his other self, in this sense, that he desires his good just as he desires his own; and so it is that a friend is said to be one's other self; and Augustine remarks in his Confessions: Someone has well said of his friend: Thou art the other half of my soul." [8]

This opinion of the Angelic Doctor is confirmed by the teaching of Aristotle, that true friendship either finds men equal or makes them so. Hence it is, we may justly conclude, that Christ in His friendship for us, was not satisfied with the purchase of our souls at the price of Calvary, but to establish, as it were, some sort of equality in His friendship, communicates Himself to us in the Sacrament of

[8] Summa, 1a. 2ae. q. 28, art. 1.

Love, to bridge over the chasm existing between His Infinity and our own nothingness.

Well does St. Paul write from his prison in Rome to the Church at Ephesus: "But God (who is rich in mercy), for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved), and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus." [9]

What return of love, then, am I to make to God for all the manifestations of love that He has shown to me? As the Apostle of the Gentiles reminds the converts in Rome, "He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" [10] And St. James in his Catholic Epistle, "Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." [11]

A close personal attachment to the Crucified was the great characteristic of Paul the Apostle. From the moment that he was struck down on the way to Damascus, and, trembling, cried aloud, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" [12] until the scales were stricken from his eyes,[13] he groped in darkness. But, having

[9] Ephes., II, 4-6.
[10] Rom., VIII, 32.
[11] James, I, 17.
[12] Acts, IX, 6.
[13] *Ibid.*, 18.

heard the message from the lips of Ananias,[14] "Immediately he preached Jesus," [15] and preached Him Crucified to his dying day. Well, then, does one commentator thus sum up the life of this Apostle who learned to return love for love; "But what was foremost in his thoughts and in his affections was the love of the Son of God, who had loved him and had given Himself up for him. It was this love of Christ which was the great stimulus of his entire life,[16] which caused him to challenge all creatures to be able to separate him from Christ, the supreme object of his affection,[17] to long for death in order to be forever with Christ,[18] to be ready to die for the sake of his name,[19] and finally to exclaim: If any one love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema!" [20]

We are warned in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "Give to the Most High according to what He hath given to thee, and with a good eye do according to the ability of thy hands." [21] Loyola understood this truth with a profound conviction that whatever good he had, was derived from God; his being no less than his redemption; the faculties of his soul, and whatever bodily perfection he had attained; with the realization, too, that the true standard of

14 *Ibid.*, 18.
15 *Ibid.*, 20.
16 II Cor. v, 14.
17 Rom., VIII, 35-39; Philip., III, 20.
18 *Ibid.*, I, 23.
19 Acts, XXI, 13.
20 I Cor., XVI, 22.
21 Eccli. XXXV, 12.

love required on his part some return for every gift received; in exultation of complete surrender of himself to Him who daily surrendered Himself to His lowly creature in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Ignatius burst forth in his sublime *Suscipe,* "Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given me all; to Thee, O Lord, I restore all; all is thine, dispose of all just as Thou wilt. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for these are enough for me." [22]

The countless gifts we have received from God may be viewed under a triple aspect. In the first place, we may consider the blessings in themselves, as coming from God their Author. Then, again, we may consider these same blessings with God personally present in them, much the same as in the Divine Concursus. For do we not read in the Book of Wisdom? "But all men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God: and who by these good things that are seen, could not understand Him that is, neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the Workman: but have imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be the gods that rule the world. With whose beauty,

[22] Spir. Exerc. of St. Ign. Cont. for Obt. Love.

if they, being delighted, took them to be gods: let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they: for the First Author of beauty made all those things. Or if they admired their power and their effects, let them understand by them, that He that made them, is mightier than they: for, by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby." [23]

Finally, we may consider Almighty God, not only as personally present with His gifts to us, but actually co-operating, as it were laboring and toiling in their production. As we find it in the words of the Evangelist, "But Jesus answered them: My Father worketh until now, and I work." [24] St. John Chrysostom develops the same idea, when he writes: "Though men till the earth, and have the help of cattle for the purpose, and pay great attention to the tillage, and though there be fair weather, and all other earthly requisites combined; still, apart from the Master's assent, it is all vain and to no purpose; and nothing will come of these many labors and toils, unless the hand of Heaven joins in the work, and gives it to the crop to fructify and come to maturity." [25]

It is easy, then, to understand how Canon Sheehan, in holy revery seems raised above the

[23] Wis., XIII, 1-5. [24] John, v, 17. [25] Chrysostom, Hom., v in Gen.

earth and all things earthly, as he thus soliloquizes: "I want to know who is the timekeeper and warden and night watchman of my flowers. It is not the sun, because they are awake before the sun, and after his rays slant high above their heads. It is not the light, because whilst it is yet light, light enough to read with ease and pleasure, behold, my little flowers close their eyes ever so softly and silently, as if they feared to disturb the harmonies of Nature: and as if they would say: We are such little things, never mind us! We are going to sleep, for we are so tiny and humble, why should we keep watch and ward over the mighty Universe? And again, who has bidden my crocuses wake up from their wintry sleep, whilst the frost is on the grass, and the snow is yet hiding in the corners of the garden beds? And here, my little snowdrop, so pure and fragile, braves the keen arrows of frost and sleet, and pushes its pure blossoms out of the iron earth! This is a bulb of hyacinth; this the bulb of a gladiolus or a dahlia. But the former wakes up in the early Spring, and hangs its sweet bells on the pure virgin air; while the latter sleep on through the cold of Spring and the blazing heat of Summer, and only wake up when all Nature is dying around them, and seems to be calling, calling for another proof of its immortality. Who is the

watchman of the flowers? Who holds the timepiece in his hands, and says: Sleep on, O dahlia! Sleep, though Spring should call for universal allegiance, and Summer winds challenge thee to resurrection; but awake, Narcissus, and tremble at thine own beauty! It is not the atmosphere. The Spring might be warm, and the Autumn chilly, or vice versa. It is not the temperature, for the most fragile things flourish in the cold. What is it? Who hath marked their times and seasons, and warns them when their hour hath struck? Who but Thou, great Warden of the Universe." [26]

And a little later, the Canon returns again to the same general subject of the wonders of God manifest in nature. "I sat in my garden a few evenings ago. . . . As a lookout on a great steamer on the high seas, staring into the darkness, feels the mighty vessel throb beneath him, and watches the phosphorescence of the waves, and hears the beats of the engines, so felt I the thrill of Being—the vibration of existence. And as, far up in the darkness on the bridge of the vessel, silent, invisible, stands the captain, who controls the mighty mechanism beneath him—dumb, watchful, with a light touch on the electric knob before him, so I saw Thee, though Thou, too, wert invisible, O my God—I saw Thy finger on the magnetic

[26] Sheehan, Under the Cedars and the Stars, Autumn, III.

key of the Universe; and I feared not the night, nor the darkness, nor the grave, for I knew that the destinies of us and of Thy worlds were safe in Thy keeping." [27]

On a peak of the Andes, 14,000 feet above the sea, and marking the boundary between Chile and Argentine, was erected in 1905 a colossal statue of Christ, with this inscription: "These mountains shall crumble to dust ere Argentines and Chileans break the peace which at the feet of Christ, the Redeemer, they have sworn to maintain." When his countrymen were on the verge of war, the Bishop of Benevento in Argentine, besought them to submit the question in dispute to arbitration. His voice prevailed, and the statue was erected as a pledge of perpetual peace.

Not a statue of stone, but the living Christ, the Sacramental Christ of Love, must mark the boundary in our lives, between the things of God and the things of earth. Upon the highest pinnacle of our affection and our love, must we enthrone our Crucified. And the inscription, deep graven on each heart, must be: "This heart of mine shall crumble to dust ere I break the peace which at the feet of Christ, my Redeemer, I have sworn to maintain."

Then, when at length we have found our way to God; when the plaintive cry of each poor

[27] *Ibid.*, XIV.

tried soul has finally prevailed; we shall have reached life's close, perhaps despised and crucified by men, but triumphing with the Crucified of Calvary, our very sufferings and tribulations the means of saving to the Christ so many souls for whom He died. And as we have been faithful in His Divine Crusade, as we have sought the Nazarene, and sought Him Crucified, as we have sacrificed the fleeting joys and fancied pleasures of earth, so for eternity shall our sorely-tried souls claim peace and calm. For, now at last, they find their rest in God.

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